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THE IMPOSSIBILITY  
OF THE  
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

AS AN ARTICLE OF FAITH:

IN REPLY TO SEVERAL WORKS WHICH HAVE APPEARED ON THAT SUBJECT  
OF LATE YEARS.

BY

M. THE ABBÉ LABORDE OF LECTOURE.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE AUTHOR'S LETTER TO THE POPE.

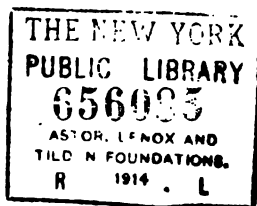
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE THIRD EDITION, AND  
EDITED, WITH NOTES,

BY A. CLEVELAND COXE,  
RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH, BALTIMORE.

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"It is a crime to take anything from the Faith; but it is also a crime  
to add anything thereto."—BOSSUET.

PHILADELPHIA:  
PUBLISHED BY HERMAN HOOKER,  
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## P R E F A C E .

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THE following treatise has special claims to the respect and attention of American Roman Catholics. It is the work of a conscientious Roman Catholic priest, who has attained to years and dignities in his own land, and who is a firm and consistent asserter of Roman Catholic doctrine, as expounded by the great Bossuet. Now, the principles of the school of Bossuet have been those which American Roman Catholics have always professed, in commending their religion to their fellow-citizens of this Republic. They were the professed principles of Cardinal Cheverus, and of several successive Archbishops of Baltimore. They were re-asserted in Congress, during the past winter, by a distinguished Roman Catholic member; (a) and, when *ultramontane* notions have been imputed to the prelates and laity of the Roman communion in this country, they have been almost without exception denied and rejected with professions of abhorrence.

No one has yet ventured to commend the *ultramontane* form of the Roman Theology, as such, to the respect and confidence of Americans; and those who have advanced them at all, in their over-zeal, have been denounced as not speaking for their co-religionists. (b) Now it is a fundamental principle of the Gallican or *cis-montane* theory, that the Pope cannot make an article of the Faith by himself alone, or without the formal sanction of an Ecumenical Council. (c) This the Abbé Laborde maintains,

(a) Hon. J. R. Chandler.

(b) As in the case of the "Shepherd of the Valley" newspaper.

(c) *Ultramontane* or *beyond the mountains*, is the term applied by the Gallicans to the Italian theories of papal sovereignty. This side the Alps those theories have, until of late, been regarded as fanatical, very generally, in France and in Germany.

and ventures to maintain practically, as well as theoretically; regarding the late decision as a nullity. In this position he is not alone, and he will have an increasing support. Especially in America, will Roman Catholics resist the usurpation of a prerogative, which no pontiff, even in the Middle Ages, ever ventured to assume, and the assertion of which by Pius the Ninth, involves a principle entirely novel and subversive of the Constitutions of ages. To leave the new dogma itself entirely out of the question, the principle on which it is added to the Faith, is one of the most important and startling developments of which any age has borne witness.

What then was the *motive* or real object of the publication of the Bull *Ineffabilis* on the 8th of December, 1854? It was to extinguish the *Gallican* and to erect the *ultramontane* theory as the true doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. It was an ecclesiastical *coup d'état*, by which the powers of a General Council were seized and usurped for all futurity, by the Sovereign Pontiff alone. For, if a Gallican or American Roman Catholic accepts the Bull, he admits the authority of the Pope to define an article of the Faith, without a General Council, and in so doing he becomes an *ultramontanist*; but if he rejects the Bull, he is *excommunicated* and cast out of the Church, so far as the Pope can do so for such cause. He has only the old Anglican resource of considering such an excommunication as a nullity, based as it is on an illegal claim and contrary as it is to the Canon Law.

The questions concerned in this matter are therefore two, viz.: (1.) Is it true that the Blessed Virgin was conceived without original sin? (2.) If it be true, has it indeed become an article of the Faith, by virtue of the pontifical decision, *unsupported as it is by the voice of a General Council?*

The following treatise supplies an abundance of reasons for concluding, that all the evidence of antiquity and of Scripture is contrary to the opinion of the Immaculate Conception; and that if it be lawful to hold the opinion, it is impossible that it should become an article of Faith.

THE TRANSLATOR.

Baltimore, May, 1855.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE discussion here laid before the reader has already undergone two unsuccessful efforts to see the light: twice has it been printed, ready to appear, and twice it has been suppressed.

Although the matter was not less than four years pending, and in circumstances melancholy enough both for the author and his book, this is not the place to enter into any details. Suffice it to say, that it was the Archbishop of the author's native place, who brought all his influence to bear to hinder its publication. Twice did this prelate denounce the book and carry it up to the Court of Rome, and through his agency it was twice put into the Index.(a) The author cannot possibly discover what Monseigneur de la Croix, or the theologians of the Roman court, could find to condemn in the discussion contained in this sketch, either on the subject of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, or on that of some circumstances added in our own times, to the Gospel narrative of the Passion of our Lord:(b) or

(a) The *Index Prohibitory*, in which such works as those of the great Fenelon have shared a similar fate.—Tr.

(b) *Discours sur quelques fausses Légendes touchant la dernière partie de la Passion de Notre Seigneur Jesus Christ*, par M. L'Abbé Laborde. This work is part of the original publication, but is omitted here, as having no immediate bearing on the subject.—Tr.

rather, he can easily understand why this controversy should receive such harsh treatment at the hands of the Archbishop of Auch and the counsellors of the Congregations at Rome; simply because it shows, plainly and convincingly, truths which they do not relish.

The author, long before publishing these two treatises, sent them in manuscript to his Archbishop, begging him to examine them, and if he found anything in them contrary to Catholic orthodoxy, to let him know, that he might correct it. As for the first one, the author learned from the prelate himself that he had not read it, but that he had handed it over for examination to the superior of the seminary and his colleagues. To these the prelate referred the author to learn their opinion, doubtless that he should adopt it instead of his own. The superior was simply pleased to show, by a certain pettishness of manner, his disapproval of the book, but refused to adduce any single remark of the examiners, or to indicate any single passage which it might be necessary to correct. As for the second, which was sent by a trusty hand some time after the first, the author could never learn what his Bishop thought: for he did not acknowledge the receipt of it at the time, and later, when it was printed, said he had never seen it.

The two treatises were printed together in 1850; and the author, having learned that his Bishop condemned them as containing doctrines injurious to souls, beside a great number of propositions which were false, erroneous, scandalous, insulting to Bishops, to the Pope, and to the Church, bordering upon heresy, etc., begged the prelate time after time, to show him what was this pernicious doctrine, and what might be these monstrous propositions. He could never obtain any reply.

The author took the same steps, with eminent cardinals of the Roman Congregations, both before and after they had sat in judgment upon his writings. Before condemning them, they excused themselves from saying why they were going to do so. After having once condemned them, they refused to show how they could be so corrected as to save them from another rejection. When they were reprinted, revised and somewhat altered, they condemned them again, without ever giving their reasons.

Now what is this but treating us with derision, or rather exercising dominion over us, and over our faith, against the prohibition of Christ, and the rule of the Apostle?(c) So the affair ended by a settled conviction on the author's part that good faith was a thing not to be looked for at the hands of his censors, and that what they blamed in the book, is not any error, (which it does not contain) but simply the truth, which is unwelcome. The reader will be able to judge, if such be the case, and will decide for himself if this is the spirit in which sober men should conduct the examination and censure of books, at least when they profess to act dispassionately, and to have in view only the glory of God and the interests of truth.

A few words must now be said as to the reasons which led the author so to persevere in the publication of this controversy, as to carry the work a third time through the press.

The author is a priest of the true religion.(d) As such, it is his glory to love the truth, to seek it out, to hold it

(c) See St. Matt. xx. 25. 2 Cor. i. 24.

(d) This sincerity of the Abbé Laborde, in clinging to the religion of his forefathers, is a touching proof that in attacking the new dogma, he is not influenced by any leaning to the views of Protestants.—Tr.



fast, to defend it. This glory he can let no man take away. And he is persuaded that his best apology for himself and his works, are the works themselves.

This is why he publishes them, and he appeals with confidence, against the unjust censures which would have had them suppressed, to the judgment of every free man, every enlightened mind, every heart loving truth and justice within the pale of the Catholic Church. It is needless to say here what will be found farther on in the introduction prepared for the preceding edition, but it must be noticed that the reasons which called for a second edition, were still more imperative in requiring a third. I must further mention as a reason, the imminent danger in which we stand of a false decision as to an article of faith.

Now such a definition may become the source of so many evils, and is, of itself, at the start, so great a misfortune to the Church, that there is nothing which any one of us should leave undone, according to his power, to prevent it.

No doubt there are some who think such a misfortune impossible, at least from the quarter from which we apprehend it, but that security does not remove the danger; it but makes it, on the contrary, more to be feared. Whatever they may choose to think, Christ has not assured us, by any promise, against such a misfortune, and if men would only not shut their eyes in order that they might not see, the experience of past times would show only too plainly that this misfortune is more than possible.

Is not every one aware of the existence of a restless party in the Church, that thirsts for novelty and excitement, and whose fanaticism knows neither rules nor bounds?(e) Is it not evident that this party holds the

(e) The Ultramontane party, and the *Univers* newspaper.—TR.

Court of Rome at its will? Are not the Roman Congregations(*f*) filled with theologians imbued with all the errors and animated with all the fanaticism of this party? Did not Rome, only lately, make common cause, even against the solemn acts of our bishops, with the organ of this clique, in the matter of the newspaper everywhere decried for its spirit of sedition, calumny, insult and falsehood? Now then it is this troublesome party, all those who compose it, from the smallest to the greatest, who clamorously demand that the popular notion of the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin, should be defined as an article of faith. In their profound blindness they all hail the prospect of this definition, declaring it to be the remedy for all the ills of the Church. This they have represented to the sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX, ever since his accession, as the act that is to throw immortal glory upon his pontificate.

From the ruins which the Roman theologians have accumulated around them, from the universal laxity which they have brought upon the Church, are we not authorized in fearing everything from their influence?

What has become, in their hands, of the practice of penitence? What have they done with the afflictive and essential part of that duty—abstinence and fasting? No more Fridays and Saturdays, no more Lent(*g*) and it is Rome itself, under such advisers, that has destroyed all this by her lavishly distributed dispensations.

The theologians of the Court of Rome have introduced into Christian morality, the leprosy of usury, one of the

(*f*) These *Congregations* are Committees of the Cardinals; thus, there is a "Congregation of the Index," another "of Rites," another of "Indulgences and Relics," etc.—Tr.

(*g*) That is, by means of dispensations, old-fashioned fasts are practically abolished.—Tr.

crimes held up for our greatest abhorrence in the Sacred Writings. They have agreed to make the practice of this crime compatible with the practice of devotion; and have decided not to trouble the conscience of those Christians who put out their money to usury, against the injunction of the law of God,<sup>(h)</sup> and who take increase, over and above the capital, without respect to the Titles—*Damnum emergens* and *lucrum cessans*.<sup>(i)</sup> The theologians of the Court of Rome have given such decisions, that persons now-a-days, even while keeping Christian observances can *live together in marriage like the heathen which know not God*.<sup>(j)</sup> The ministers of religion are forbidden to enlighten them, even in the privacy of the confessional, upon the duties of their condition, the laws of conjugal chastity, or even the rules of nature, lest the knowledge of their duty should interfere to disturb their conscience in their irregularities.<sup>(k)</sup>

What shall I say of theatres? The Fathers of the Church, especially Tertullian, St. Ephraim and St. Augustine, say that Theatres, where tragedy and comedy are played, are assemblies and schools of the devil. The men and women who gained their living by such representations were, down to our own times, looked upon as excommunicate: their profession was declared infamous by ancient councils, and indeed was so in the eyes of even Pagan philosophers. But now, to the great astonishment of the world itself, theatres and players are seen reconciled with the Gospel; and comedians admitted to the reception of the

(h) *Decis. de la Pén.* Sep. 16, 1830, etc.

(i) Latin theologians assign three *Titles* as justifying interest—*loss arising, profit ceasing, and extraordinary hazard*.—Tr.

(j) Tobit viii. 3.

(k) *Reponse de la Pén.*, June 8, 1842.

sacraments. And only recently, the Roman government, administered by priests and directed by the divines of the Congregations, invited and stimulated literary men, in the name of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and that with promises of reward, to compose plays, either in prose or verse : that is to erect heathen trophies in honor of devils ! Dances and balls are other heathen pastimes, in which are especially displayed those pomps of the devil which we renounce at our baptism : but they seem no longer to be interdicted to Christians. Do we, in short, ever see any one deprived of the Eucharist, for frequenting them, however excessive they may have been ?

To comprise all in a word, during the last two centuries, a perfectly new method of reasoning and judging in cases of conscience has been marked out. This anti-Christian method has excited, principally in France, a general outcry. Men of letters and Christian philosophers ridiculed it; the Bishops unanimously condemned it; the Popes themselves declared this system of morals to be entirely opposed to the simplicity of the Gospel and the doctrine of the Fathers: that it widened, or rather perverted the way of salvation, which God himself declared to be a narrow way: that it was the broad way which leads to destruction; and that if it should ever unfortunately become the rule of conduct for believers, the breaking in of a flood of corruption upon the morals of Christians would be the result.<sup>(1)</sup> *This very system is, in our day, established authoritatively, by the Theologians of the Congregations.* They have gone farther: they have obtained the canonization of a casuist who has made this fountain of corruption, this broad way,

(1) Decree of Alex. VII., 1665. Apost. Const. Benedict XIV., June 26, 1749.

the basis of all moral science, and has, by his decisions, sanctioned the most shameful practical consequences.(m)

By way of proof, here are some decisions of this author, taken from among a thousand such :

*On the worship of God.* Does the precept of the Decalogue concerning the keeping holy the Sabbath day oblige us to worship God, even in our hearts? Scotus, Angel and Tabiena say that it does: but it is most commonly denied: and this decision he adopts.(n)

This morality is Pharisaical and sanctions hypocrisy: it comes under the malediction of Christ, when He said to the Jews, "This people honoreth me with their lips but their heart is far from me." (o) It is directly contrary to those memorable words of the same Saviour: "God is a Spirit: and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (p)

*On fasting.* He confirms the revolting decision of Filiutius, lampooned by Pascal: "Is one obliged to fast, who has fatigued himself doing something, running after a girl, for instance? Certainly not." "But what if he tired himself on purpose to be dispensed from fasting? Even if he had done so with that intention, he is not obliged to fast." Here are his very words: "He who fatigues himself in order to be dispensed from fasting, even if he were in pursuit of a bad object, (*etiam malo fine*,) is not obliged to fast: that seems very clear." (q)

*On homicide.* He teaches that it is lawful for a man of

(m) Alphonsus de Liguori, canonized in honor of "his virtues and miracles," by Gregory XVI. in the year 1839.—Tr.

(n) Alphons. de Liguori, Lib. iv. tract 3, etc.

(o) St. Matt. xv. 8.

(p) St. John iv. 24.

(q) Lib. iv. tr. 6, etc.

honor to kill any one who attempts to give him a blow with a cane, or the hand. He says, moreover, that it is lawful to kill a robber for the value of a few ducats, and, in certain cases, for the value even of a crown; following herein Escobar, notwithstanding the condemnation of his thesis. He adds: We say, with *Lessius, Soto, Bonacin, Prado, Trullench*, etc., that it is lawful to fire from a distance upon the thief and to kill him, if he carries off the stolen article, and, understanding your intention, refuses to give it up. In fine, "is it lawful to kill the thief if he has hidden away in a safe place the stolen thing that you wish to recover? *S. Antoninus* and others deny that it is, but the contrary appears to me more probable, especially if there is no hope of recovering your property by any other means." (r)

*On oaths and mental reservations.* "A culprit, or a witness, interrogated irregularly by the Judge, may swear that he has no knowledge of the crime, although in fact he has, by making this mental reservation—that he knows nothing of the crime on which he may be legitimately questioned; or that he has no knowledge of it, such as to give testimony about it." On the same grounds, the witness is not bound to depose, "if, for example, he is convinced that the crime was innocently committed; or, if his knowledge of it was obtained under secrecy, before the affair became public."

But how if the culprit or the witness be regularly examined by the Judge? "If the crime is not in evidence before the Court, the witness may say, (*he is even bound to say*) that the accused did not commit it. The accused may do likewise, if there be not one good half-proof against

him (*si non adest semiplena probatio*), for in that case the Judge does not question legitimately."

Can the culprit legitimately questioned, deny his crime, even with an oath, if threatened with a heavy penalty as the consequence of his pleading guilty? "*Elbel* says, most probably not; but *Lessius*, *Lugo*, *Tambourin*, *Sa* and *Filiutius* say that the accused *very probably(s)* may, if threatened with penalty of death, perpetual imprisonment, or exile, confiscation of his property, the galleys, or other like punishment, deny the crime, even upon oath, (at least without grievous sin,) by making to himself this reservation, *that he did not commit it so far as to be bound to confess it, (quatenus teneatur illud fateri)* provided that by these means he hopes to elude the punishment." *Elbel* adds, that although this opinion is the less probable, it should nevertheless be suggested to culprits, and their confessors, so as to guard them against a serious fault which they might easily fall into, if obliged to admit their guilt.(t) Is it possible to imagine a doctrine more infamous or more subversive of justice? And this is the doctrine adopted by this Author. Let us hear him again.

"If one has received money as a loan, and afterward cancels it, he may say that he received no loan, by making this reservation, *so as to be under obligation to pay it*. If any one has made a forced contract of marriage, he can say, *even upon oath, before the judge*, that he has made no contract. In the same way, he who gives a promise of marriage, but in a manner not binding, may deny that he ever made such a promise, *in such a manner as to be bound*

(s) And according to the principles of St. Alphonsus, a *probable* opinion may be safely adopted by anybody, for practical purposes.

—Tr.

(t) Lib. iv. Tract. 2, etc.

by it,(u) being understood. We could fill a volume, but this is enough to give an idea of the strange corruption infused into every duty of moral life by the casuist of whom we speak.

The sovereign Pontiff, Gregory XVI., before proceeding to celebrate the canonization of our *probabilistic* Author, consulted, according to custom, a Commission of Theologians of the Roman court, to know *whether his books contained any error against the faith or against good morals, or any new or strange doctrine or idea differing from the general sentiment of the Roman Church and its theologians.* The Commission, *themselves thoroughly imbued with the corrupt and corrupting morality contained in the books given to them for examination,* answered, very naturally, that *the author's doctrine was irreproachable,* and on this false verdict, the casuist was canonized.

Benedict XIV., in his treatise on the canonization of saints, cites, as an obligatory rule, the terms of the decree of Urban VIII., which run thus: "If the person proposed for canonization has written books, treatises, meditations, &c., no act of inquiry shall be instituted until after the congregation of cardinals shall have examined with greatest care, if these writings contain any errors in matter of faith or morals, or any doctrine strange or contrary to the general opinion and custom of the Church."

He also adduces, approvingly, what follows, taken from the account of the canonization of St. Charles, Bishop of Milan: "The writings of all those proposed for canonization should be examined and considered with mature deliberation, to know whether they contain throughout, sound doctrine, conformable to the teaching of the Roman



Catholic Church ; because if it be otherwise, and the authors set forth ideas or opinions different from those commonly held and taught by the Roman Church and its doctors, the canonization must absolutely be withheld ; for it is certain that evil doctrines are displeasing to God, and the authors of them cannot be considered as lovers of God."

In conclusion, he says himself : "If the books of those proposed for canonization are found to be free from error, other inquiries into their case should be proceeded with. But if, (which God forbid,) their books are found to contain errors, let there be silence upon the subject of their beatification and canonization ; seeing that it is not expedient to hold up to public veneration one who has put forth, in his writings, any thing against religion or morality, or who has attempted to introduce a new doctrine or one differing from the acknowledged opinion and custom of the Church."

In another part of the same treatise, the same pope says : "According to the law of these decrees, it is impossible to proceed further so soon as it shall be ascertained that the servant of God in question, has written any thing containing errors in the matter of religion, or morals, or against the general opinion of the Church, even if it should have been done unconsciously and with good intentions."

It is perfectly manifest that if these necessary rules had been followed, Alphonsus de Liguori would never have been canonized. That he has been, is only because the rules have not been followed. This casuist has been canonized, then, against the rules of the Holy See, which are professedly those only of religion and reason. It was evidently surreptitiously obtained, since it rests, for its essential foundation, upon the declaration of the Commission

who reported that his doctrine is pure and sound, as the rules require that it should be; while such is not the case.

The majority of the priests, particularly those who hold ultramontane views, have blindly taken for granted, from the canonization of the author, the sanctity and safety of his doctrine. By it, *the narrow way of the Gospel*, according to the expression of the popes, *has been widened, or rather perverted, and the broad way which leads to perdition, every where thrown open for use*. Since that day, it is almost in vain to look for Christian morals in Christianity. Even among the small number of those who conform to the external observances of religion, hardly can a few be found who do not lead a perfectly heathen life.

Why should it surprise us then that the men who have destroyed the practice of primitive morality, should balance their work by the introduction of a new faith?

It is certainly the will of God that the men who are painfully impressed by these novelties and disorders, and who have no opportunity to oppose them otherwise, should oppose them by their writings. Christ promised that the gates of hell shall never prevail against the Church. The gates of hell are the errors and the corrupt maxims of the age. He did not say that errors, abuses, and prevarications should never enter into the Church, but that they should never *prevail against it*. Now, how does He hinder their prevailing? By raising up wills and efforts to oppose them. In the midst of the widest spread abuses, errors, and prevarications, He always so works, that there are heard in the churches, voices, however few in number, crying out for truth, for pure morals, for ancient discipline. Thus it is that abuses and errors do not obtain, and that false decisions, and even false definitions do not receive that legitimate unanimity of adoption, and that open, un-

disturbed possession which gives them force of law. And thus errors and abuses, whatever may be the number of those who adopt them, are never any thing more, in the Church, than the act of individuals; and the truth, *defended and maintained by a few, on the side of Scripture, the canonical traditions and the saints of times past, is, through them, none the less, the abiding doctrine of the Church* ;(v) visible enough to be found by those who love it.

This, then, is the great reason why the author opposes the attempt to make a new article of faith; and he does so with all the more vehemence, as the decision, forcing it upon him, seems so near at hand.

In this edition, the second is exactly reproduced, except some grammatical corrections and some alterations bearing only on details and affecting neither matter nor doctrine. At the end of the work will be found some fragments of the first edition, suppressed in the second by the author, under the impression, that they were the things that had given offence.

Some other pieces are added, serviceable to the author's defence, and at the same time important to the principal object of the work.

(v) This principle is laid down very strongly by St. Vincent of Lerins, and is the principle of the English Reformation.—Tr.

## INTRODUCTION.

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I. and II.—*The bearings of this question upon the honor of the Blessed Virgin.* IV.—*On the belief of the laity and the importance of their opinion.* V.—*On the value of the opinion of theologians and on reasons of expediency.* III., V. and VI.—*True state of the question.* VII. and IX.—*Objects of the work.* VIII.—*The author's intentions.* X.—*Answer to the objection that the sovereign pontiffs had formerly forbidden the discussion of this question.* XI.—*That it had been better not to have stirred up again, in France, a dispute that had quite died out: but since the partisans of the Immaculate Conception have revived it, equity calls upon us to answer them, that our consciences be not burdened.*

I.—All Catholics hold the doctrine of the Council of Trent as inviolable.(a) We all believe, then, that “the Blessed Virgin, who reigns with Jesus Christ, offers her prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful to call upon her for her intercession, and to have recourse to her prayers and aid to obtain the benefits of God by His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who alone is our Redeemer and Saviour.”(b) We all believe, moreover, according to the Scriptures and the tradition of the Holy Fathers, from

(a) All *Roman* Catholics do so, but in so doing they have subjected themselves to more than one departure from the Catholic Faith, and to the very outrage of which the *Abbé* complains.—Ta.

(b) Council of Trent. § 25. *De Invoc.*

whom we hold the form and doctrine of all true piety, that the Blessed Virgin combined in herself the double miracle of divine maternity and an undefiled virginity. We therefore profess the highest consideration for the Mother of God, and render her as such a special religious veneration above all other saints.

II. On this point then, that the Blessed Virgin is to be honored, we are all agreed ; we should also be on this, that she *can be honored only by the truth*. How can fanciful praises, and unreal eulogiums, conduce to her honor and glory ? Besides, when we honor the Blessed Virgin, it is not so much, after all, that we honor her, for it is not in her that our homage terminates. "All religious worship should terminate in God as its necessary end." This is the admirable saying of Bossuet.(c) "All the grace and all the greatness of the Blessed Virgin belong to God, who is their author. She herself declares it : "*He that is mighty hath done to me great things.*" Thus in celebrating her prerogatives, it is God whom we praise. Now, God, who is truth, does not accept false praise. He has told us so by the mouth of holy Job : "*Will ye speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for Him ?*"(d) We cannot, then, without a temerity that He condemns, offer Him praise and thanksgiving for mysteries which He has not wrought.(e)

III.—The question, then, whether we must bestow upon the Blessed Virgin the title of *conceived without sin*, is not a question as to the propriety of honoring her. It depends simply on this : *Is it true* that she was conceived without original sin. If we know this for certain, that is, if God

(c) Exposition de la doctrine Catholique.

(d) Job xiii. 7.

(e) Apply this principle to the Romish fable of the "Assumption," &c.—Tr.

has revealed it, (for who would pretend to know so hidden a thing without the divine revelation,) if, I say, we know it by God's having revealed it, then nothing can be more just : let it be believed, let it be defined ! If, on the other hand, the thing is not so ; or, which is all the same for us, if we do not know that it is so, not having any revelation on this matter, how can we believe that of which we are ignorant, or how define that which we do not know ?

This, then, is the first thing to be asked : Is it actually true that the Blessed Virgin was not included in the universal law of conception in sin ? Is this ascertained, with certain knowledge ? Has God done this, and has he made it manifest to mankind, by authentic revelation through Jesus Christ and the Apostles ?

IV.—The sentiment of the faithful ought to have no influence in this question. For who, in short, taught them the doctrine, and on what is their sentiment founded ? Is it the place of the laity to determine the faith of their pastors, or does it belong to the pastors to form the opinion of their flocks ? Am I to persuade myself that the laity know what the pastors do not ? Indeed, how many erroneous doctrines have we not, in the course of time, seen accreted among the people. That certain points in practical matters, involving moral good and moral ill, should be supported by the sentiments of right-minded and conscientious laymen, can easily be understood ; but when the thing in question is, as in the present case, one of pure dogma, a positive fact, depending solely on the free decree of God, with which neither human reason nor conscience has any thing to do, of what use can the sentiments of the people be in deciding it ?

But what is the belief of the laity ? This is, still, an open question. There are a large number, I grant, who

believe in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin ; but there are also a considerable number who do not, and these *are by no means the least enlightened*. Moreover, since this dispute has been revived, and every body has learned the state of the question from the bull of our Holy Father Pius IX.,<sup>(f)</sup> a large majority of laymen, understanding perfectly well that it is only a controversy, do not believe or think any thing on the subject, but are waiting quietly to see what is to come of it. And here I only speak of good, pious laymen, for we all know how little interest indifferent Christians, (and they, alas, form so large a proportion,) take in this matter. Is it not unhappily true, that for many it is hard to believe even the doctrines of the Apostles' Creed ? What, to them, is the Immaculate Conception but a new obstacle, another pretext for unbelief ?

The opinion of lay Christians in favor of this doctrine might have some weight if it went back to the early ages of Christianity. Pope Alexander VII. speaks of it as old, (*Vetus fidelium pietas sentientium*,) but he does not say that it always existed. It might have been old in his day without dating from a very early period. He says, the number of believers who held this opinion increased after the bulls of Sixtus IV., that is, at the end of the fifteenth century, which proves that till that day, it had not been very large. He adds, that the number increased again later, when they saw Orders and Brotherhoods established under the title of the Conception, and by means of indulgences ; and, lastly, it increased a third time, when the greater part of the most celebrated universities *began to*

(f) The Bull *Ubi primum*, published at Gaeta, February 24, 1849.—Tr.

*admit* this opinion; which by necessary inference, they had not received before. In tracing back, then, from the time of Alexander VII., we find that the tendency of the laity to believe in the Immaculate Conception diminishes at a very rapid rate; which leads us to think that at a given period, nobody believed it, and that, consequently, it is a new opinion in the Church. But this will be seen further on.

V. Neither is the opinion of the theologians of the last centuries generally, nor that of the clergy of our day, of great weight in deciding the question. Between the one proposition, that *the generality of theologians, in the last centuries, THINK that God must, by especial privilege, have preserved the blessed Virgin from all taint of original sin*, and this, that *God did so*, the distance is infinite. Why do modern theologians *think* that the conception of the Blessed Virgin must have been immaculate? Because they *think* it not congruous that it should have been otherwise.(g) But what if God, on the contrary, judged that it was congruous? Were they with God in the beginning when He laid the foundations of the earth? Did they guide Him with their counsel when He formed the plan of the mystery of the incarnation? Scripture teaches us that the ways of men are not the ways of God, neither are His thoughts as our thoughts, but that the difference between the one and the other is as the heavens are higher than the earth. How many things has God done in the great work of our redemption, which human reason would not have found suitable, had it been consulted! And how can we wonder if our ideas of propriety were not carried out in the mystery of the incarnation, wherein it pleased Jesus

(g) Bossuet. *Catech. Feast of the Conception.*



Christ absolutely to confound all the notions of human wisdom by his unspeakable humiliation? The holy Fathers of the first ages nowhere mention these pretended proprieties: it does not appear that they even imagined such a thing. And how comes it that modern doctors pretend to be wiser than the Holy Fathers, and to have found out and known what is due to the mystery of the incarnation, and to the ineffable quality of Mother of God, better than SS. Gregory, Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose, Cyprian, Irenæus and the other great men who flourished near apostolic times? It is not upon all this, I repeat it, that the definition of the question under consideration depends, but upon this, *Is it surely ascertained, beyond doubt, that the conception of the Blessed Virgin was not accompanied by original sin? Has God authentically revealed it?*

VI. This, then, is what I have undertaken to discuss in this book, and I have appealed to the great principle of perpetuity, according to which principle, "God reveals no new truths: we acknowledge no new revelations: the Church proposes no new dogmas:"<sup>(h)</sup> but all that is true, revealed and necessary to be believed, "is contained in Holy Scripture, or in the unwritten traditions which, derived by the apostles from the mouth of our Lord, or dictated to the same apostles by the Holy Spirit, have come down to us as from hand to hand."<sup>(i)</sup> On this principle *any belief of which, the origin and obligation, does not date*

(h) Bossuet. *Lettre à Leibnitz*, Jan. 9, 1700. Such was the untenable, though no doubt honest assertion of Bossuet, in the seventeenth century, in spite of the novelties of Trent. What would, or could, he say now? It is still true of the Church Catholic, but certainly not of the Roman Catholic Church.—Tr.

(i) Council Trent, § iv. *de Canon Spirit.*

*as far back as the apostles, can neither be, nor become a part of the Catholic faith.* I prove in this book that there was a time in which a belief in the immaculate conception did not yet exist. By referring to historical records, I am able to name the period at which it began to be formed; to indicate the first Doctor who openly endorsed it, and to show its novelty by *the very fact of its gaining a progressive sentiment in its favor.* Finally, I conclude that this opinion can never, ~~on any grounds~~, be declared an article of faith; and I show the impossibility of the thing by the absurdities which must follow upon it.

VII. I will now say something of my intentions. I profess to publish this little work without any party spirit, or any fondness for dispute. I write because I have studied, and am personally convinced of the truth of what I say. I believe, according to the words of Saint Peter at the Council of Jerusalem, that "we should not tempt God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." I see clearly that the opinion of the immaculate conception cannot be established as a dogma, and proposed as an article of belief, without shaking the foundations of religion, by injuring the great rule of the unity and perpetuity of faith. If I speak plainly, it is because a matter that concerns religion to such a degree cannot be indifferent to me. The Catholic faith is a treasure that belongs, in common, to all who have the happiness to profess it. All are called upon to preserve it pure and to defend it. The clergy not only have the right to do so, but it is their duty, because they have Him for their pattern who said: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

VIII. Although I write under a firm conviction, I write none the less in a spirit of submission. I lay my work before my lords the Bishops, the Holy See and the Universal Church, and am ready to listen to any remarks, and to learn from all intelligent men. I pay all deference to the Roman Congregations. I suppressed entirely the first edition of my book, on learning that they had condemned it. I cannot tell to what this severity on their part is to be attributed, but I sincerely think it is not to my doctrine. What seems a good reason for thinking so, is that, although I wrote several times asking them earnestly to tell me where lay the fault in my book, and their reasons for condemning it, they never gave me any kind of explanation. Now, if I had made some serious mistakes in doctrine, it strikes me that they could not have avoided telling me what they were, for it is a bounden duty of charity to show him his error who asks to be told of it, and to bring wanderers back to the right path. In my first edition, some personal matters were introduced, in which I opposed the views of some distinguished persons. I spoke of the frivolity of the men of our day and the ignorance of the age. Thinking that such observations might perhaps be unpleasant, I have suppressed, in this edition, all proper names, and every thing that might have given the least cause of complaint. I have added a good deal and reviewed the whole with care, and I am convinced that as I now offer it, the severest examiners, if they will be but just, can find nothing in it to disapprove.

IX. I have also my own private reasons for giving this new edition of my work: *First*, its existence having been announced to the public, I consider it as belonging to them. There are very many, both pastors and people, who, in this as in all things, care to know only what is true, and who

desire to be informed. They ought not to be deprived of a work that was undertaken principally for them, and by which they will be glad to be disabused of a number of errors into which they may have been led, by some other writings, that have lately appeared on the subject.

*Secondly*, The condemnation of my book was published everywhere in connection with my name. Many may have supposed that my doctrine was unsound. In that case, I have certainly a right not to allow that stain to rest upon my reputation. Indeed it is my duty; for this is just such an instance as that I should appropriate the words of St. Augustine to his clergy: "Attend to what I say; conscience and reputation are two different things. Your conscience is your own; your reputation your neighbor's. He who, relying upon regulating himself by his conscience, neglects his reputation, is cruel; above all, if he holds the rank of the disciple to whom the apostle wrote—*In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works.*" (a)

And *lastly*, severe charges were made against my book by some particular individuals. The book not being there to defend itself, ought I to be deprived of the power of answering their unjust animadversions?

X. I must now provide against a difficulty of another nature. I am told that several popes, the last of whom was Alexander VII., forbade all discussion on the subject of the doctrine of the immaculate conception. Very well; we are not now considering the opinion, in itself, but a new question, *i. e.* whether it can to-day, eighteen hundred and fifty years after the Christian era, be *made a dogma and imposed upon our faith*, or, as they express it, *be defined*. The discussion of this was never forbidden by any pope.

(a) Sermon 355, *de moribus cleric.*

And then, the nature of decrees of this kind must be considered. Let us hear what theologians say: "The simple prohibition," says Montaigne, "of a word or of a proposition, on account of an abuse occasioned by it, or of disturbances or divisions that it may have given rise to, is purely a law of policy, of economy, of precaution for the time being, which ceases to be binding when the abuse is done away with, the disturbances settled and quiet re-established. Then it becomes again lawful to sustain such proposition and to make use of it again." (b) Now what gave rise to troubles and divisions about the present question? We all know it to have been the jealousy of two religious orders, holding contrary opinions, and each defending its own with party spirit. And again, from the division of the school theologians into disciples of Scotus and disciples of St. Thomas. But nothing now is to be feared from disputes between Dominicans and Franciscans, Scotists and Thomists. In France the Schools no longer exist, and those religious orders are not now rivals on that point. As to the laity, they are, unhappily too much absorbed in interests of another kind, to take a lively part in our written controversies. So, it is very evident that the circumstances are no longer the same: what the constitutions once prohibited, can no longer be looked upon as forbidden.

Moreover, the same Papal constitution forbade that those who hold the old opinion, namely, that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin, should be blamed, or charged with heresy or mortal sin or want of piety. *Do the modern writers observe the constitutions on this point?* Do we not find some of them striving to bring us under penalties, or at least to subject us in the judgment of a reader,

(b) *Cours complet. t. 1. de Censur. Theolog. i. § 3.*

to such an exemption (*piaculum*) as implies a fault? The same constitutions forbade those holding the opinion of the immaculate conception from mentioning it in public prayer, or chanting it at mass, or reciting it in Divine service. But do we not now see all this done wherever we turn? These things prove, then, that the constitutions were not intended to be always in force. It will be said that these things are done by dispensation. I know it: but when dispensations come to be dealt out indiscriminately, they destroy the laws. Moreover, in this case, dispensations for some, justly involve dispensations for others. Will those who do not believe in the immaculate conception chant it at mass, or recite it at Divine service? This would be utter hypocrisy on their part, a simulation unworthy of their sacred office: therefore, they will not do it. Not to mention the discord thus brought about in religion, how will this affect them? In the eyes of uninformed Christians (and they are always the larger number) their piety will be suspected: they will pass for enemies of the worship of the Virgin, for heretics and profane men: and among the priests there will be found some to hold nearly as bad an opinion of them, and to show it very plainly. Ought they then quietly to suffer these unjust suspicions? Or rather ought they not to abate the scandal, to give a reason for their conduct, and to show what is really the case, that they have *reason, science and truth* on their side? Finally, the sovereign pontiff, Pius IX., has, in his recent bull, *asked to be informed as to the mind of every body*, not only of the bishops, but of the priests, and even of the laity. He could not have asked for hasty opinions given at random, but rather for such as were carefully studied and well grounded. How then can some form a deliberate opinion, or others tell what theirs

is, without writings in which the question is discussed? Thus the bull of Pius IX. alone would suffice, if need be, to release us from the restraints imposed by his predecessors.

XI. Until less than twenty-five years ago, disputes on the subject of the immaculate conception had, for a long time, been entirely extinct. Would to God that they had never been revived! The true course for us was to have left them buried for ever, and to have learned to remain satisfied with what is strictly of faith, each and all striving to practice the holy injunction of the Apostle: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." What is the imaginary honor that they pretend to obtain for the Blessed Virgin by introducing the novel obligation to believe in her immaculate conception, in comparison with the real honor that she would derive from our unity, if there were no division among us, on her account, and if, with one mind, we all gave glory to God for her virtues, her greatness, and her crown? But until things can again be so, at least let the scales be even: and while those who stand up for the immaculate conception have full liberty to labor for the spread of their opinion by adducing all manner of false proofs, let us be as free to answer them, opposing, to their errors, the truth.

I subjoin an historical summary of the acts of the Popes with regard to this matter, viz: those of (1.) Sixtus IV.; (2.) Pius V.; (3.) Paul V.; (4.) Gregory XV.; (5.) Alexander VII.; for having spoken of the decrees of the Popes, relative to the conception of the Blessed Virgin, it may be satisfactory here to give an abridged account of them.

(1.) The first which appeared concerning the feast of

the conception, is the bull of Sixtus IV., *cum præcellsa*, in 1476. It encourages the celebration of this festival, and grants indulgences to those who recite an appropriate office, approved by him, and composed by two Franciscans. "But this office, shortly after, was rejected by the Roman Church, which thought more proper that the one for the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, should be used instead." (c)

The same Sixtus IV., to tranquilize the dissensions and discord which disturbed the Church on the subject of the feast of the Conception, and particularly of the office just mentioned, issued, in 1483, another bull, (*Grave nimis*), in which he forbade that those who held the opinion of the immaculate conception, and recited the office of *Nogarolis*, should be charged with heresy or mortal sin. Under the same penalties, he also forbade that any should charge with heresy or mortal sin, those who held that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin. Sixtus IV. was a Franciscan. His bulls were approved and renewed by the Council of Trent.

(2.) About a hundred years later, that is, in 1570, disturbances and offences not ceasing, or being renewed, Pius V. issued a new bull, *Super speculam*. He forbids all mention of this controversy, on one side or the other, in public assemblies of men and women, and all written discussion upon it in the vulgar tongue. He allows both parties to discuss their opinions openly in the schools where there exists no fear of giving rise to scandal. He then leaves all at liberty to attach themselves to either opinion, according to what each respectively believes to be more pious, or more probable. He says that neither side may prejudice the question, nor must they mutually condemn each other. He holds the balance equal. He was a Dominican.

(c) Fleury, B. 114, n. 83.



(3.) In 1617, Paul V., being much importuned by the King of Spain in favor of the immaculate conception, issued the bull, *Regis pacifici*. He renewed the constitutions of his two predecessors, Sixtus IV. and Pius V., and made the penalties heavier for those who would not observe them for the future: which proves that the disputes and disturbances had not died away.

(4.) Gregory XV., in 1622, set forth a new bull. He therein forbade, until it should be otherwise ordered, or until the question should be defined, that any one should assert in public that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin, declaring, at the same time, that he did not mean to controvert this opinion, or say any thing prejudicial to it. He also forbids the other party from attacking this opinion, or speaking of it on any public occasion when they might be expressing their belief in the immaculate conception, which he gives them power to do. He then forbids all whomsoever to assert that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in sin, either in private discourse or by writing: *those only excepted to whom such permission may be granted by the Holy See*. Gregory XV. allowed these privileges to the immaculate conception, to satisfy the strong and urgent solicitations of the Kings of Spain who, for a long time, had been endeavoring with all their power, to have this opinion established as an article of faith. (d) Finally, he forbids any other word to be used, at the celebration of the Holy Sacrament, or in Divine service, than that of *conception*, without any thing else.

The same year, the same Pope issued the bull, *Eximii atque singularis*, in which he gives permission to the Dominican friars to discuss this controversy, according to their

(d) Perrone, part i. c. 4.

opinion, among themselves and in their own particular schools.

(5.) Lastly, Alexander VII. issued the bull *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum*, in 1671. He renewed the bulls of his predecessors, especially those of Sixtus IV., Paul V., and Gregory XV., and gave new orders for their observance. He forbade that they should be looked upon as containing nothing favorable to the idea of the immaculate conception; or as not favoring devotion to the Blessed Virgin; or as opposed to the feast of her conception, if celebrated with the idea of its having been immaculate. He forbade all from gainsaying this feast, or devotion, by word of mouth or by writing, directly or indirectly. He then expressly renews the prohibition concerning those who hold the other opinion, that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin: namely, that they should not be condemned nor charged with heresy or mortal sin, or want of piety.

It must be noticed that Alexander VII. reduces the belief in the immaculate conception to the opinion that the soul of the Blessed Virgin could only have been endowed with grace and preserved from original sin at the moment of its creation and infusion into the body; which, according to theologians, does not take place until the fortieth day after conception.



# TREATISE.

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## CHAPTER I.

A PERIOD IS SHOWN PRIOR TO WHICH NO SUCH BELIEF AS  
THAT OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION EXISTED.

I.—*Importance of this fact, and the principle of Tertullian.* II. and  
III.—*Testimony of St. Anselm.* IV.—*Historic Retrospect.*

TERTULLIAN says<sup>(a)</sup> “it is not lawful for us either to introduce any thing of our own will, or to attach ourselves to any thing which any one else has thus introduced. We claim as our originals the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, who never presumed to introduce any thing of themselves, but who faithfully *transmitted* to the nations, what they themselves had received of Him.” It is evident on this principle, the rule and foundation of all authoritative tradition, that if the doctrine of the immaculate conception was preached by the apostles to all the nations, it ought to be admitted; but that if, on the contrary, it was not so preached, but has been introduced and propounded as doctrine, by others, we are bound to reject it. Now, therefore, if we can assign an epoch, previous to which this doctrine was unknown to the Church, and at which it took its rise, the case is adjudged. In fact, the

(a) *De Præscriptione Hæret.* c. vi.

blessed apostles having published to all mankind all that was delivered unto them, and the Church having always preserved inviolate all that they delivered, which is all that we can be bound to accept as matter of faith, it follows that the faith can have no origin subsequent to them, but has existed, necessarily, from the beginning, in all Churches, and at all times. (b)

II. Now, we can assign with exactitude the most complete, the period when the doctrine aforesaid began to form itself, and, of course, a period previous to which it had no existence. Thus, then, we affirm, that this doctrine did not yet exist so late as the close of the eleventh century. It was in the year 1098, and in Rome itself, that St. Anselm produced his tractate *Cur Deus Homo*, in which the holy Doctor treats, at large, of the mystery of redemption, in the form of a dialogue between himself and the Monk Bozon. Now, in the second book of this treatise, as reported by Fleury, Bozon proposes a question as follows: "How is it that God has taken human nature from the corrupt mass of the human race, seeing, that although his own conception was stainless, the virgin, from whom he received his humanity, was conceived, nevertheless in original sin, having sinned in Adam, *in whom all have sinned?*" St. Anselm replies, that "seeing it is evident that Christ is God, and the author of the reconciliation of sinners, there can be no doubt that he is absolutely sinless, but that it need not surprise us, although the mode of his taking flesh, without sin, of the mass of human corruption, be incomprehensible." He adds not a word

(b) This is the great Gallican and Anglican principle, which the new doctrine of *development* has been invented to withstand. Gallicans and Anglicans only differ as to *historical facts*; but the ultramontanists reject the principle itself.—Tr.

concerning the Blessed Virgin, except to say that "she is included among those whom Christ has purified."

III. Can it be imagined that St. Anselm would have answered in this way a difficulty, which has no force except on the supposition that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in sin, provided he had known of any recognized opinion in favor of her immaculate conception? Obviously, it is not a supposable thing. The saint might not have admitted the opinion for himself, but he could not have omitted all notice of it, or treated it with such contempt, as a non-entity. If he had not introduced the mention of it, in stating the difficulty, at least he must have suggested it, as the subject naturally demanded, in constructing his answer. In giving a solution of the difficulty, he would not have left existing in all its force, and even corroborated, the proposition *that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin*, without saying any thing of the contrary opinion. For he does give it the fullest corroboration, by saying, subsequently, "that she, the Blessed Virgin, was of the number of those who were purified by JESUS CHRIST." Of course there could have been no purifying, had there been no stain.(c) St. Anselm then has expressed himself on this point, as it could only have been done at a period when no one, as yet, excepted the Blessed Virgin from the taint of original sin. If any one will not admit this, let him explain how it happens that St. Anselm, in full view of the existence of the notion of her immaculate conception, which he could not but have known, had it then existed in the Church, could have treated *it as of such*

(c) The new dogma is so worded as to allow that Jesus Christ must be credited with her *exemption* from stain; but *exemption* and *purification* are different things.—Tr.

*little consequence.*(d) But we shall see, by further testimony, that the notion had not yet been invented.

IV. Down to the time of St. Anselm, during all the preceding centuries of the Christian era, we find in the monuments of Ecclesiastical history no trace of the opinion of the immaculate conception. Not a canon, not an act, not a debate, not a scrap of writing indicates its existence. The holy Fathers did not even conceive such an idea.

In fact, the holy Fathers *unanimously* speak of the transmission of original sin to all the descendants of Adam, without excepting from this law the Blessed Virgin, or hinting that any one makes such an exception. They say unitedly, simply, and without abatement, "that to be without sin *belongs to Jesus Christ alone*; that no creature conceived by the embrace of man and woman, has been exempt from original sin, and that *He only* was exempt from it who was conceived without this embrace, and by the operation of the Holy Ghost."(e) This, too, is the judgment of St. Ambrose, repeated a hundred times by St. Augustine, in his contest with Pelagius.

They take strictly, according to the letter, those passages of Holy Writ which contain the doctrine of the propagation of original sin, *in all human beings*, by generation from Adam, in whom *all have sinned*; and the doctrine of the spiritual death of sin, as affecting all those for whom JESUS CHRIST died and rose again. They make no mystery of such passages, and they fully include the Blessed Virgin, in their assertion, with all others, confining the exception, rigorously, to Christ alone. "Except JESUS CHRIST ALONE, who died for all others, all are dead, in

(d) See St. Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, Lib. ii. 16, 17.—Tr.

(e) St. Jerome. *Dial. contr. Pel.*

the death of sin original, or sin actual, absolutely without any exception (*nemine prorsus excepto.*") (f)

The holy Fathers, in short, when the subject requires it, say plainly, and without abatement, that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in sin; that she came in *sinful flesh like others*; that she was, like others, *purified* by the grace of JESUS CHRIST, and that she *received the grace of regeneration.* (g)

The holy Fathers unanimously express themselves as I have indicated, without hinting, or implying in any way, the existence of any one who thought the contrary, and this down to the time of St. Anselm (A. D. 1098) inclusively. St. Bernard, the last of the Fathers, is the first who notices the existence of an opinion which exempts the Blessed Virgin from the universal law of conception in original sin; and he speaks of it, as we shall see, to oppose it, to expose its novelty, to contradict it by preceding tradition, and to protest against it, saying that "the prerogative of a holy conception was reserved to Him alone, who came to sanctify all others." (h) It is therefore an established historical fact, that the Fathers were ignorant of the "pious opinion" of this immaculate conception, and that such an opinion did not exist in the Church previous to the twelfth century.

And now, what must be thought of the pretences of our contemporaries, who boast that they find it in the Fathers? The assertion has no foundation in fact. Let others examine, with requisite fidelity, the passages which are pro-

(f) Aug. de Civit. Lib. xx. cap. 6. And yet even Archbishops have the audacity to tell us that St. Augustine held this doctrine.—Tr.

(g) St. Aug. Contr. Jul. op. imp. Lib. iv. n. 122.

(h) Ep. clxxiv.



duced, and they will see that they are all either obscure, or intangible, or irrelevant and nothing to the purpose, or foreign to the question, or warped from the real signification, or falsified, or supposititious; or improperly attributed to ancient sources, while, in fact, the work of modern and unrecognized authors.(i)

In conclusion, many of our most learned and esteemed theologians have recognized and confessed the fact that the doctrine of the Fathers does not exempt the Blessed Virgin from the Scriptural law of original sin, but includes her in the common lot of taint, inseparable from the natural descent of flesh from Adam. Among such are Melchior Canus,(j) Estius,(k) le père Pétéau,(l) etc.

(i) The want of principle with which the *spurious* quotations have been used, and manufactured to prop up the cause of the new dogma, can only be explained by the fact that their authors are professed *Liguorians*, in their morality.—THE.

(j) *De loc. theol.* lib. vii.

(k) *Com.* on St. Paul, 2 Cor. v. 14.

(l) *De Incarnatione.*

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BELIEF IN THE DOCTRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION TOOK ITS RISE IN THE TIME OF ST. BERNARD.

*I.—The Doctrine is rebuked by St. Bernard as a novelty, unauthorized by tradition, and originating with a clique of ignorant simpletons.*

*II.—If then the doctrine was known before the time of St. Bernard, his letter must have been a tissue of absurdities, falsehoods and calumnies. VI.—Spurious quotations.*

I. The letter of St. Bernard to the canons of Lyons, A. D. 1140, on the occasion of a feast in honor of the *Conception*, which was then coming into vogue among the Lyonese, confirms what we have derived from the words of St. Anselm, and becomes a guarantee of these three facts: *First*, That the notion of the immaculate conception had no previous existence. *Second*, That it then just began to form itself; and *Third*, That its authors were a few ignorant individuals, whose simplicity was their only excuse.

Of these facts, the first is demonstrated by a single passage of this letter, noble monument as it is, of the testimony of antiquity upon this point: "I cannot sufficiently express my astonishment at the proposal of some of you, to introduce a novel festival, of which the *usage of the Church knows nothing, which reason rejects, and which has no countenance from tradition*. Are we wiser than the Fathers? Are we more pious than they? It is a presumptuous thing to touch, in such a matter, anything

which their prudence pretermitted, seeing it is of such a nature, that if omission had not been a duty, it could not possibly have escaped their diligent regard."

The other two facts are attested by another passage of this same letter: "If it was resolved to establish this celebration, the authority of the Holy See should have been first consulted,(a) and not thus precipitately and rashly should the folly of a few silly ones have been adopted. I had already observed this *error* among a few such persons, but I held my peace, thinking charitably of the zeal which

(a) Observe *what it is* that should have been submitted to the Pope: not an *article of faith*—not even the doctrine of the immaculate conception, but the question whether a feast of the *conception* (without the prefix *immaculate*) might be allowed to a particular Church! The idea that a pope could make a dogma out of a *superstition* never entered St. Bernard's head. Besides, those who are acquainted with St. Bernard's history and writings, know very well how little confidence he had in appeals to Rome. Over and over again he testifies of the corruptions of that court, and the pontiff then reigning (his former pupil) had been soundly admonished by him, and was greatly under his influence. Besides—and *this is of primary importance in all mediæval questions*—St. Bernard was, at this time, as were all the school doctors, down to the time of the Reformation, deceived by the forged *Decretals*, which they imagined were authentic compilations of the primitive canon law. This imposture of the Court of Rome, invented subsequent to the division of East and West, has been exposed, and abandoned, by the most eminent Romanists themselves, who no longer speak of them except with shame and reprobation; and yet the whole *Tridentine system* is based on them. The Trent Decrees are the arch, built over the frame-work of the *Decretals*, and now that the arch holds by its own construction, they consent to give up the old frame. See an admirable condensation of this subject in the little work of Meyrick, "*L'Eglise Anglicane n'est point Schismatique.*" p. 52. See also Bishop Hopkins' "End of Controversy Controverted." Vol. 1. p. 71.—Tr.

seemed to proceed from a simplicity of heart, and from love of the Holy Virgin: but now, when I find this *superstition* among persons of discretion, and in a church so famous, of which I am specially the son, I do not know how to restrain myself, without committing a breach of duty, even against yourselves."

II. St. Bernard took it for granted that the reason which induced the canons of Lyons to celebrate the feast of the *conception* of the Blessed Virgin, was an idea of its being an *immaculate* conception; and therefore, he applies himself in the residue of his letter to convince them that it was no such thing. This, alone, is sufficient evidence that there was no such opinion then known to the Church. For how is it possible, otherwise, that a father so pious, and so specially devoted to the Virgin as St. Bernard, could have affirmed so positively, or could so earnestly have set himself to establish the fact that the holy Virgin, the object of his profound veneration, and sacred enthusiasm, was not exempted from the taint of original sin? If the opinion had been then established in the Church, that her conception was immaculate, how is it possible that he could have opposed the introduction of a feast of the *conception* of this Holy Mother of God, even to the point of calling it a *superstition*, on the very ground that it appeared to him to involve an idea that her conception was immaculate! (b) This is altogether repugnant to reason.

(b) The old Augustinian rule is that the church celebrates nothing but what is holy. If you celebrate the *conception*, then, argues St. Bernard, you imply that it was *holy*, which is contrary to the doctrine of original sin. But that the Virgin was exempt from original sin, he says, is an unheard of thing; and on this his whole remonstrance is based. "*As yet,*" he adds, "I do not learn that any one pretends she was conceived by the Holy Ghost,

III. If then the opinion of the Immaculate Conception had existed in the Church before St. Bernard's day, there is not a word of the passages cited, there is scarcely a word of the whole letter, which does not offend against good sense and justice, or which may not be accused of falsehood. Could it possibly have appeared surprising to the Saint, for example, that the Lyonese Canons should institute a feast of the *Conception* of the Blessed Virgin, if there had been any visible traces in the Church, of any doctrine, received from the apostolic age, to the effect that her conception enjoyed the privilege of exemption from the taint of original sin? Had such been the case, the surprise would have been of an opposite character, and a saint, so devoted to the Blessed Virgin as St. Bernard, would have marvelled not to see such a festival established, but to see it established so very late. But observe his language: "I am *greatly amazed* at your introducing a novel celebration;" and he adds that it is one, "neither commended by reason, nor sanctioned by ancient tradition." Evidently, this is a falsehood, provided the doctrine did then exist, especially if it existed by warrant of antiquity. It may not always be expedient, but certainly it is always reasonable, in itself, to honor by external rites, and to celebrate with festivities, those mysteries which we believe that God has wrought. What was it, then, but injustice, on the part of St. Bernard, to address the Canons of Lyons with the serious reproach that they were making themselves wiser than the Fathers, if they could have answered truly that the *immaculate conception* which they presumed to celebrate, was not only known to the

and not by man." Here was some foresight of development! Possibly this will be the next article of faith to which infallibility will treat us.—Tr.

Fathers, but had been received from them? And again, his accusation that "they were guilty of presumption in meddling with matters which the prudence of the Fathers had left in the dark, and which could not have escaped their zeal had it been true:" what is the common sense of such a charge, if urged in full view of an ancient and professed opinion of the holy Fathers, accredited by the Church? Every word in this entire extract from St. Bernard proves the fact, that when he wrote, there was no such *opinion* as that of the immaculate conception.

IV. But another passage in the same letter, not only shows that it was in his days that the opinion took its rise, but more, that it was the offspring of the simplicity of ignorance. In what straight-forward and express terms he asserts this to the Canons of Lyons! He is surprised. "that they should adopt the simplicity of a few upstarts." Further, "he had repressed his feelings as to the *error*, in view of the fact that *he first discovered it*, among a handful of ignorant persons, carried away by the weakness of their affections for the Virgin; but could no longer do so, when he saw such a *superstition* among men of sense."

Now *error* signifies *false belief*, and it is here applied by the saint to the opinion of the immaculate conception; while, like a clear-headed theologian he gives to the practical institution of the festival, founded on this false belief, the name of a *superstition*. So that these two things are the novelties which he condemned: 1. The festival of the conception, and 2. The opinion of the *immaculate* conception. As to the festival, "of which the ritual of the Church knows nothing," he declares that he saw its first introduction, in the Church of Lyons. As to the opinion by which he supposes its authors to justify the festival, he

had detected it in some ill-informed Christians previous to its adoption by some of the Canons.

V. Will any one say, then, that St. Bernard deceives us, or that he talks at random? This is the only reply that remains. But the matter is too serious to allow such a thought, and St. Bernard was too careful in weighing his words. He was too grave a character, and too much attached to the honor of the Virgin, to allow the least word to escape him, on such a subject, that was not conformed to the evidence of facts. So that the gravity of St. Bernard, his profound illumination, and more especially his enthusiastic devotion to the Blessed Virgin, are our sure warrant for insisting that this opinion of the immaculate conception, had no shadow of recognition in preceding ages, and that, in fact, it originated in his own times, and in the circumstances we have reviewed.

VI. It is pretended, I know, that notwithstanding this letter to the Canons of Lyons, St. Bernard has elsewhere taught, in his writings, the opinion which excepts the Blessed Virgin, from the universal law of original sin. But those who say this, or who believe it, cannot have examined very closely the grounds of such an assertion; nor as it became them to examine them, before affixing to a Saint, so dear to the Church, the stigma of so monstrous a contradiction. But, be this as it may, they cite the sermons on the *Salve Regina*, and represent St. Bernard as having said—"innocens fusti ab originalibus et ab actualibus peccatis—Thou wast innocent, oh Queen, of all sin, whether actual or original."

But, as to this, the answer is, that the four sermons on the *Salve Regina*, attributed in some old collectors to St. Bernard, so far from being known to be his, are quite indisputably recognized as the work of another, as may be

seen in the preface to the Paris folio edition.(c) This is an important fact.(d)

Besides, whoever may have been the author of these sermons, such as are content to give their suffrages only to what is true, have only to read the whole passage, to see clearly that the little extract above cited, has by no means the same force as it stands with its context, which it seems to have when separated. The author is not speaking of the conception of the Virgin, but of her nativity. He asserts that she is *born* free from original sin; but, like St. Bernard, he teaches that she was conceived in sin, though delivered therefrom in the womb, as John Baptist was, and Jeremiah.(e) I have no room for the entire passage, but any one who has eyes to see may satisfy himself. For one, I am glad to have exposed, by this specimen, the method by which they endeavor to make visible in the holy Fathers, this doctrine of the immaculate conception.

(c) Also, page 1663.

(d) Although thus marked as spurious by their own highest authorities, (as in the late Benedictine edition, in large octavo, vol. iv. p. 1442,) would it be believed that this passage is quoted, at large, as *St. Bernard's*, in a book published in Boston (Patrick Donahoe, 1855,) and approved by Bishops Neuman and Fitzpatrick? The work abounds in similar deceptions.—Ta.

(e) Jeremiah and John Baptist were consecrated as *prophets*, before their birth, and this St. Bernard supposes to involve remission of original sin. So much he is willing, therefore, to allow to the Virgin. But St. Bernard is *too modern* a father to be a safe guide as to doctrine, however invaluable his testimony as to facts. His errors were the fault of his times; and yet even he is pure as snow, compared with the modern Saints of Roman canonization.—Ta.



### CHAPTER III.

THE OPINION IN QUESTION HAD NOT REACHED GERMANY,  
DOWN TO THE TIME OF ST. BERNARD'S DEATH.

1.—*The Complaint of Pothon.* II.—*No one remonstrated with SS.  
Anselm and Bernard.*

I. As to England and Italy, St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, writing in Rome, as we have quoted from him, is a sufficient witness that the opinion was not in those countries in his day, while St. Bernard shows us how novel it was in France, when he lived. We now cite a testimony which establishes the fact, that down to the middle of the twelfth century, the notion of the immaculate conception had no existence in Germany. It is that of Pothon, a monk and priest of the Abbey of Prum, in Germany. According to Fleury,<sup>(a)</sup> it was about the year 1154, or one year after St. Bernard's death, that he complains of certain new devotions that were coming into use in the monasteries. "What constrains me," he asks, "to celebrate these festivals, that of the Holy Trinity, and the Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord? *Some even add the feast of the Conception of Saint Mary, which seems more absurd.*" Now, it is true, that even if the notion of this conception, as *immaculate*, had then obtained among the German Churches, Pothon might have objected to the

(a) Fleury, livre lxxi. n. 36.

new feast, as he did to that of the Trinity; but then he would have objected to it on the same grounds. He could not have treated it as *absurd*, except because he had never, as yet, heard any one speak of the conception as immaculate.

II. And here is the place to introduce a most important consideration: the fact that, at this epoch, no controversy arises, among church authors, about the doctrine thus scornfully rejected. For, suppose the doctrine had then been held and cherished, is it possible that the susceptibilities of pious consciences would have received no wound from the positive expressions of St. Anselm, and from the galling reproaches of St. Bernard? Could the authors, who have shared in this belief, have endured in silence the condemnation of the feast of the conception as an *absurdity*, on the express ground that it seemed to spring from their own devout imagination. In spite of their respect for St. Bernard, could they have failed to object that he had broken the restraints of an equitable moderation, by attaching, so confidently, the stigma of a *superstitious error* to an accredited opinion, and by affirming, in a serious epistle, that he had never heard of such an opinion till he found it existing among a few ignorant fellows? Nay, would they not have been bound, in duty, to *prove his mistake*, when he ventured to assert that the doctrine had no root in preceding tradition? Let any one, in our days, assert the same, and speak of the immaculate conception as did SS. Anselm and Bernard, and, however unimportant his work, let him note the consequences! Nor would their language have failed to excite a similar indignation in those days, had the doctrine then been known, and cherished as ancient truth. Are not the animosities excited by the first printing of this little book of

mine, a proof of what I say? There is no escaping the conclusion, then, that the state of men's minds was not, in those days, what it is now; nor that, if the authors aforesaid, spoke as they did, not only without scruple, but *without contradiction*, it was because they gave utterance to the unanimous faith of Christendom, and because there was not, as yet, any sentiment to the contrary, which could presume to withstand their testimony.

## CHAPTER IV.

IN THE DAYS OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS THE OPINION IN QUESTION WAS NOT EVEN A SCHOLASTIC SENTIMENT.

I.—*Proof from the Summa.* II.—*The Feast of the Conception itself, did not imply this opinion, according to St. Thomas.*

I. ST. BERNARD'S letter was not successful in checking the devotions at Lyons, for, on the contrary, they continued, and gradually communicated to other Churches this Feast of the Conception. But they explained it so that it should be understood, as their justification, (and this was the received apology, throughout the Churches which adopted it,) that the conception of the Holy Virgin was not celebrated as *immaculate*, but only as an historical event. Thus St. Thomas Aquinas says—"The celebration of the Feast of the Conception *does not imply that the Blessed Virgin was holy in her origin*; only, as no one knows at what time she was first sanctified, the day of her conception is made the festival of her sanctification; and not so much her conception as her sanctification is celebrated, even on that day."(*a*)

(*a*) See the *Summa*, part iii. quest. xxvii. Where he not only excuses it on these grounds, but speaks of the feast as merely *tolerated* by Rome itself, and "not altogether to be REPROBATED." And yet, an impudent author who has undertaken to apologize for

The *conception* of the Blessed Virgin is celebrated, then, only in the same sense as, in imitation of the Eastern Churches, the *conception of St. John Baptist* is commemorated; either on account of the miracle which accompanied these two events, (Elizabeth and Anna being both barren beforehand,) or because the conception of St. Mary, and that of the Baptist, were the immediate forerunners of the holy and immaculate conception of the Eternal Word.

By no means, therefore, has the belief in this notion of its holiness, kept pace with the observance of a feast in honor of the event. To judge by the manner in which St. Thomas treats it, it did not, in his day, amount to an *opinion* properly. In fact, the holy Doctor who, like SS. Anselm and Bernard, teaches with all confidence, that the Blessed Virgin contracted the taint of original sin, and that she was not sanctified in her mother's womb, until after her soul had been united to her body, (b) says nothing

the new dogma, (Dunigan & Brothers, New York, 1855,) argues that the black-letter, or apocryphal, date of the *conception* which stands in the English calendar merely as a traditional way-mark, implies the belief in an *immaculate* conception. "It can hardly be supposed," he says, "that any religious body would institute or preserve a festival, in commemoration of any event that *was not in itself perfectly holy*." St. Thomas, however, does suppose so; and the whole Roman Catholic Church, has for four centuries kept the feast of the *conception*, without any declaration that it was "perfectly holy." Bishop Ullathorne's little treatise, amid innumerable falsifications, contains the same misrepresentation of the fact, which St. Thomas so unequivocally asserts.—Tr.

(b) It is even amusing to observe the solemn legerdemain with which the defenders of the new dogma attempt to distinguish between *active* and *passive* conception, and so to help St. Bernard, St. Anselm, and St. Thomas out of the quagmire of *heresy*, by distinctions and refinements the most ludicrous and ineffectual. In spite of their sophistry, however, there stand those old saints, branded as *heretics*, by Pius IX.—Tr.

about the existence of any opinion in the Church, contrary to his own. Had such an opinion then existed, he ought to have remarked it, and he would have done so. Such was the plan of the *Summa*, and one from which he did not depart, in other discussions; as, for example, in treating of the writing of divorcement, under the Law of Moses, and the question whether it rendered the divorce itself innocent; and of the question whether Christ would have become incarnate if Adam had never sinned. In treating upon these points, his first words are—"On these matters there exist two opinions." Not that he leaves them undecided: he gives his own judgment, decisively, in both instances; but as a faithful teacher he does not allow his disciple to remain ignorant of the exact state of the case. Could the holy man have been less careful to set forth the whole truth, in a question supposed to concern the honor of the Blessed Virgin? It is not to be supposed; and seeing that St. Thomas has thus dealt with the matter of the conception of St. Mary, making no mention of any opinion different from his own, we must conclude that no such opinion, in his day, had any accredited existence.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FEAST OF THE CONCEPTION DOES NOT IMPLY THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

*I.—The grounds of this observance. IV.—Historic facts. V.—Testimony of Bellarmine.*

I. Some are disposed to lay the greatest stress on the fact of this festival of the conception, as celebrated by the Roman Catholic Church. They even assert that its institution was equivalent to a dogmatic decision. But, how can this be sustained? Let us see.

II. The conception of St. John Baptist, is to this day, celebrated by a festival, in the Eastern Churches, and formerly, it was equally observed in the West. Will any one thence conclude, and even insist upon it as an article of faith, that John Baptist was also immaculate, in his conception? But if such a feast does not prove it in the one case, neither does it in the other.

If no other reason could be assigned for the keeping of such a feast, it might indeed be fairly deduced, that such is its justification. But, as without any reference to such a reason, there are many considerations which justify it, we must naturally revert to them for its explanation.

III. As a fact, then, we show that there are other reasons for the celebration, and that such are the reasons intended by the Church, in establishing it. The testimony

of St. Thomas is unfeigned and unequivocal, as before quoted, that "the feast does not imply an *immaculate* conception." And here is what Bossuet says in his catechism:

"Q. What feast do we celebrate on the 8th of December?"

"A. The *Miraculous* Conception of the Holy Virgin."

"Q. Why do you call it *miraculous*?"

"A. Because it was the gift of God to Joachim and Anna, her parents, *who were barren*."

"Q. What should be our principal meditation on this day?"

"A. The thought of the great corruption of our nature, and the great mercy of God in giving to mankind the holy Virgin, from whom they might have the gift of a Saviour."(a)

IV. Now Sixtus IV., who, in the year 1476, authorized the celebration of the festival of the conception, makes no mention in his bulls (*Cum præeccelsa*, etc.,) of any design to define, or to approve, the sentiment of the *immaculate* conception. The sole ground which he assigns for the thanksgiving, is the marvellous (*mira*) conception of the Virgin, as explained in the quotation from Bossuet. Neither he, nor his successors, ever called it the feast of the *Immaculate* Conception, but the feast of the *Conception* solely. But more, they have rejected an appropriate service, in which the notion of the *immaculate* conception was embodied, although it was not proposed as obligatory upon anybody: and when the feast itself was rendered

(a) BOSSUET. Catech. Feast of the Conception. It is painful, always, in reading Bossuet, to observe his ingenuity in reducing Romanism to something like the Gospel: while the manner in which his Church now rejects and scorns his expositions, is more painful proof of its utter contempt for the Gospel itself.—Ta.



public and obligatory, everywhere, it was ordered that no other service should be used than that for the *nativity* of the Virgin, with the bare substitution of the word *conception*, wherever the word *nativity* occurs in that office. Moreover, the popes have expressly *forbidden*, the addition to the word *conception*, in the performance of public worship, of any adjective expressive of the idea that it was immaculate. As to Alexander VII., even he does not signify that the celebration of the 8th of December, according to the spirit of the Church, is a celebration of an *immaculate* conception; he merely *forbids the condemnation*, or attacking, of any individuals, who prefer to keep it, with that understanding, as regards themselves.

It is observable that those who maintain this opinion, are so little satisfied with the degree of countenance it receives from the feast of the 8th of December, that they are openly expressing their dissatisfaction, and moving for a new celebration, after their own hearts, on the second Sunday of Advent!(*b*)

I conclude with the words of Bellarmine,(*c*) whose doctrine cannot be gainsaid, even by our adversaries. "The principal foundation for this feast, is not the *immaculate* conception, but simply the *conception* of the future mother of God. In fact, whatever may have been the character of the conception, its memory must be of singular import to the world, simply as that of the origin of the Deipara; for therein, we received, for the first time, a sure pledge of

(*b*) Let the reader pause here, and reflect on the stealthy and insidious progress by which this canker has eaten its way into the vitals of the Roman Church. *Every dogma of that Church which differs from the doctrine of the Church of England has a similar history.*—Tr.

(*c*) Controv. de cultu. Sanct. lib. iii. 16.

our redemption, especially in view of the fact, that she was conceived not without miracle, of a mother who was barren. This is the reason, why the feast of the conception is celebrated even by those who maintain that she was conceived in original sin."(*d*)

In short, then, all candid persons must admit, that no legitimate proof can be gathered from this celebration, in favor of the opinion in question, nor in fact, any countenance whatever.

(*d*) And as it is a reason purely fabulous, having no Scriptural warrant, happy it would have been, if such persons had foreseen the evil, and refused, at an earlier period, to give heed to "old wives' fables," or to keep any such unscriptural feast.—Tr.

## CHAPTER VI.

DURING THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY THE COMMON AND THE ONLY TEACHING OF THE SCHOOLS, WAS THAT THE BLESSED VIRGIN WAS CONCEIVED IN SIN.

### *I.—Importance of this fact. II.—Proofs.*

I. During the thirteenth century St. Thomas was by no means the only doctor that taught that the Blessed Virgin, being derived in the ordinary way from Adam, was conceived in sin, like all the other children of men. This doctrine was common to all the doctors of the age, a fact most important to be noted: for this age is the cradle of the School divinity, and the divines who then flourished, with him, are its prime authorities and its founders. From which it follows that the system which rejects the opinion of the immaculate conception, after having been the constant doctrine of the holy Fathers, was also, in its earliest day, *the unanimous sentiment of the School divines*; the only doctrine they believed or taught.

II. This important fact is one which cannot be disputed, (a) admitted as it is even by authors who maintain the doctrine of the immaculate conception. Here, for ex-

(a) The *Abbé Laborde* forgets that a disciple of Liguori, or a Jesuit, can dispute anything; a man who can believe the doctrine can *invent* his proofs, as see Ullathorne and others, *passim*.—Tr.

ample, are the very words of Habert, who has maintained the opinion with as much show of gravity and erudition, as any one. After having quoted from St. Bernard, very fairly, the passages I have myself cited from that author, he adds: (b) "Such then is the judgment of this doctor, speaking for those who preceded him, and for his illustrious contemporaries, such as Rupert and St. Anselm, who were of one accord with St. Bernard, in this matter. The same must be allowed of the chiefs of the Schools, who succeeded him; Albertus Magnus, Alexander Hales, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Bonaventure."

To the authorities thus cited by Habert, Perrone adds the names of Gratian and Peter Lombard, the one an Italian, and the other a Frenchman; authors who swayed the sceptre of theology in their own age; who during their lives were the law and the oracles of sound instruction; and who extended their authority to the ages which succeeded them. Yet, hear the confession of this same Perrone, the most remarkable author of our own times, who supports the doctrine! He says expressly as follows: "It cannot be denied that the opinion which refuses this privilege to the Blessed Virgin, *prevailed* among the scholastic divines of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, *chiefly owing to the authority of St. Bernard*, (c) and of (Peter

(b) *Theolog. moral. de vitiis*, etc., cap. vii. § 6. Observe then, that an *honest* papist gives up the matter of antiquity, and frankly professes that the pope has *made* a new truth out of an old lie. That is the only tenable position.—Tr.

(c) *De Immac. p. 1. cap. ii.* Perrone is the favorite theologian of the present pope. He admits, then, the weight of St. Bernard's known opinion, in his own age, and the two centuries following. Yet the books which are now circulated in this country, by Romanists, to support the new dogma, actually claim St. Bernard as one of its supporters.—Tr.

Lombard) the 'Master of the Sentences.' So that, the school of the Sorbonne, the most celebrated of all, *adopted* and supported it, as its own, down to the time of Scotus." The ingenious attempts which this author makes to get rid of the force of his admissions, do not prevent the fact from breaking out in all its force, from the meshes of his equivocations. It was clever, indeed, to use the word *prevailed*, as if the opposing sentiment had really been in the balance, at all, as it was not. It was cunning, too, to speak of "the authority of St. Bernard and the Master of the Sentences," as if they had not received themselves, from preceding ages, the truth of which they were merely witnesses; and, finally, there was a nice artifice in saying that the Sorbonne *adopted* the opinion of these two doctors, as if they had held previously the contrary sentiment! (*d*) In spite, however, of all this, it is no less evident, by his own admissions, that during the whole of the thirteenth century, the common teaching, and the only one in usage of the schools, was the doctrine that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin.

(*d*) This verbal cunning of Perrone is common to all the writers of his school; and they contrive to word their confessions of facts which they are forced to meet, with a bold approval, so as to destroy half their force, before they attempt the answer. Such is the legerdemain taught in the school of Liguori.—Tr.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FIRST PUBLIC PATRON OF THE DOCTRINE, AND HIS AVOWAL THAT IT WAS A NOVELTY.

I.—*Narrative of Fleury.* II.—*The confession and timidity of Scotus.*

I. JOHN SCOT, (Duns Scotus,) surnamed the subtle doctor,(a) and so famous in the quarrels of the schools, was the first who publicly proposed the opinion of the *immaculate conception*, which he did A. D. 1306. There is no need of any words on such a point, other than those of history, and the historian shall give his own narrative, accordingly. In the words of Fleury, "Scot was born at Duns, in Scotland, on the border-land of England, and entering the order of the Friars Minors, he studied at Oxford with great success. He then came to Paris, where he was entered bachelor, in 1306, by order of the general Gonzalve, and subsequently promoted to the degree of Doctor. He there sustained the opinion of the immacu-

(a) One would think he was so called with reference to Gen. iii. 1. How little Scotus foresaw that his vanity and folly, in sustaining a mere paradox, for his own gratification, was to become the curse of ages, and to breed this leprosy of a new dogma, fatal to the Christianity of the Latin Churches! How fearful to trifle with God's truth!—TR.

late conception of the Blessed Virgin, of which he thus speaks:—*They say commonly that she was conceived in original sin.* He then cites the arguments, to which he undertakes the labor of replying, and finally reduces the question to this—*I maintain that God was able to effect that the Blessed Virgin should escape the taint of original sin, absolutely ; or to allow her to contract it, for a single instant, only ; or to permit her to remain in it for some time, interposing, for her purification, only at the moment of birth.* After adding the reasons in favor of each of these three probabilities, he concludes: *which of the three was actually performed, God only knows ; but it seems congruous to attribute to Mary that which is most excellent, provided it be not repugnant to the authority of the Church and of Holy Scripture.* In this manner Scot expresses himself on this matter, and although he does it so very modestly, he passes for the author of the doctrine of the immaculate conception, which has since made such extraordinary progress. This opinion certainly took its rise subsequently to the twelfth century ; and the letter of St. Bernard to the Canons of Lyons, with those of Pierre de Celles, to Nicolas, Monk of St. Albans, in England, take it for granted that this idea (of her *immaculate* origin) gave rise to the Feast of the Conception of our Lady ; a supposition by no means necessary, seeing the Greeks still celebrate the conception of St. John Baptist, which formerly was also set down in the greater part of the martyrologies of the Latin Church.”(b)

II. Let us examine, then, the manner in which the subtle doctor expresses himself. It is clear that he himself sets the brand of novelty on his own doctrine. In

fact, this appears from three several instances: (1.) His formal avowal; (2.) The equivocation of his language; and, (3.) His timidity in deciding.

1. The formal avowal is couched in the terms—"It is *commonly said* that the Virgin was conceived in original sin." These words deserve attention. He is setting up the opinion which he proposes to overthrow; and with a view to propose his own instead of it, his temptation was by no means to exaggerate its importance. On the contrary, he must naturally have been led to make it of as little consequence as possible, so that his words must be taken at their full value. How then? "*They say commonly,*" or "*it is the common opinion* that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin." Here, then, is the general understanding, the dominant opinion, the universal belief of the age, in which he spoke.

(2.) But observe the equivocation of his language! "God may have done this, or that; or another thing: but which actually took place, *God only knows.*" He throws all into common confusion; that is to say, he hesitates, all of a sudden, to put himself in the wrong, by deciding against what everybody else believes, or to propose as a fact, what nobody ever asserted before. However, it seems something to have cast a shade of doubt upon a universal sentiment, and to have elevated to the dignity of a doubtful matter, a private and novel opinion of his own.

(3.) Then, too, the *timidity* of the doctor is worthy of note. He does not suggest, as is the fashion now, that piety *demands* the admission of the opinion of the immaculate conception; and he guards himself from any thing like the presumption of treating it as a matter of faith; he is very modest, and merely speaks of what may be congruous, without even deciding that! "It seems congru-



ous, becoming, or convenient," says he, "to attribute to Mary, whatever is most excellent." But even here he shrinks back, fearing lest he has gone too far, and adds, by way of subterfuge, "provided it be not repugnant to the authority of the Church and of the Scriptures." He is always just going to come to the point, when—*prenez garde*—he adds: "I have only said what I did say, on the hypothesis that what I said was not contrary to the authority of the Church and of Scripture, meaning, if such is not the case, not to say any thing at all."

Surely all this is the natural behavior only of one who is conscious of advancing something unheard of, and contrary to received ideas. He attacks, without rejecting, advances without maintaining any thing, feels his way through prevailing convictions, and provides for his retreat by subterfuges. If any one had ever preceded him, in such an adventure, John Scot was not the man to show this timidity in following. He would not have failed to make the most of his predecessors, to gain all possible support for his own teaching. If what he proposed had been a sentiment recognized in the Church, or the schools, he would have begun by asserting its accredited character, and he would not have introduced his caution, as to its possible repugnancy to the authority of the Church and of Scripture. But to settle the matter, we have it in his own words—that it was "*the common opinion*," in that day, "that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### REPLY TO CERTAIN REJOINDERS OF MY OPPONENTS.

I.—*It is said that I am repeating the assertions of Launoy.* II.—*That these historical facts only prove the rise of disputes on the subject.*

I. I NEED not conceal what has been objected to my two propositions as to the first proponent of the doctrine in question, and his timidity in avowing it. On the contrary, the rejoinders which have been made to my argument, will only help the truth, by being freely stated. It is said, then, to begin with, that I have reproduced the doctrine of Launoy!<sup>(a)</sup> I do not see what such a charge has to do with the case; but, positively having never read the dissertations of Launoy upon this question, I have no idea what they may contain. What Launoy says, however, or what he does not say, is of no importance; it is of more consequence to ask whether what I have said is, or is not, the truth. If it is not truth, I am ready to condemn it, myself; but if it be the truth, I do not blush to say it, whoever may have said it before.

Still, I repeat, it is not Launoy that I quote, but Fleury.

(a) *Jean de Launoi* was a celebrated French divine of the eighteenth century, who promoted many valuable reforms, and stoutly maintained the Gallican liberties against the ultramontane aggressions.—Tr.

Rather, it is but the historical fact itself, which belongs neither to Fleury nor Launoy. Now, if they do not allow the historical fact, which I assert, and which I have proved; that is to say, if they do not grant that John Scot is the earliest doctor, who openly taught and publicly recorded an opinion of the immaculate conception, let them demolish my fact, by giving the name, the discourse, and the works of any, whose previous opinions John Scot merely sustained. Who—where are these doctors? If none such can be shown, let it stand that John Scot is the first advocate of the doctrine.

II. But, in the second place they say, this fact as to Scot only shows that the doctrine was first disputed in his time. First disputed! But does not the commencement of dispute prove the rise of a new opinion? Now, which was the new opinion, that of Scot, or his adversaries? Let us examine.

It is granted, then, that there was no dispute before Scot's day, at all events, not before the time of St. Bernard. Such being the case, there are but three ways of accounting for the fact: (1.) Either the whole world was convinced of the immaculate conception as the privilege of the Blessed Virgin, and so of course there was no dispute; or (2.) some believed it, and some believed it not, and yet forbore discussion; or, (3,) nobody thought of exempting the Virgin from the common law of the children of Adam, by which they are all conceived in sin, and therefore there was no dispute. Which of these three suppositions is the true one?

1. Let us suppose the first case. Down to the time when the dispute began, all the world agreed peaceably in the immunity of the Virgin, contrary to the common law of the race, according to Scripture. Lo, then, the first

who doubted, and rejected the universal belief on this point, is St. Bernard, one of the most illustrious fathers of the Church, and one of the greatest of the saints! (b) Marvellous event! That St. Bernard, the father, *par excellence*, of devotion to the Virgin, (c) should, all at once, publicly set himself up, and with extreme violence, against this privilege of the conception, which he only, of all the world, disallowed! Although he is the only one to deny it, he attacks it resolutely, without moderation or pity, in the face of a universe which is united in its profession, and pronounces it a mere novelty, without foundation in reason, tradition, or authority! Nay, he affirms that he had never heard of such a notion till he discovered it among a few simpletons, and excuses himself for letting it pass, even in them, by saying that he pardoned their *error and superstition*, under the impression that it grew out of their well-meant zeal for the Virgin, and their natural feebleness of mind! There is no escaping this view of St. Bernard's character and conduct, on the supposition aforesaid: but who will persuade himself of such a total inversion of common sense?

And then, as to John Scot! At a moment when all the world is supposed to be agreed in the quiet belief of the immaculate conception, Scot *commences a dispute by maintaining it*, and begins in these words: "*It is com-*

(b) Such is the extraordinary implication of an expression in Archbp. Kendrick's late publication on the subject. He says: "the tradition *which has always existed* in the Church, on this point, *had suffered some obscurity* in the twelfth and following centuries." In other words, St. Bernard was the first heretic, rejecting a primitive and important truth.—Tr.

(c) Such he certainly was, his writings being altogether unlike those of antiquity, in exalting and glorifying her.—Tr.

*monly said* that the holy Virgin was conceived in original sin!" Could there be anything more untenable? My readers will remember, moreover, that I have already shown that the supposition is entirely falsified by the teaching of all the fathers.

2. But perhaps it may be said, that both opinions existed, although there was no dispute, till the twelfth century. This hypothesis is not less absurd. Men were not, then, as now, fond of their own opinions, and human nature has altered essentially! For twelve centuries, neither the natural propensity of scholars to communicate their discoveries, nor the zeal which religion inspires to defend the truth and combat error, led to any conflict, attack, defence, or even mutual explanation! During all that time not a single writer is found, sufficiently attached to either opinion, to undertake the expression of his reasons, or the refutation of objections! And not a single preacher appears, in all these ages, who presents this matter, controversially, from the pulpit; not a single doctor who has anything to say for it, or against it, in his instructions or his writings!

Now, since the twelfth century, and more especially since the commencement of the fourteenth, when John Scot flourished, the question of the immaculate conception has been, in the Church, a veritable apple of discord: the division of sentiments upon this point has never ceased to make itself apparent by striking consequences, by animosities, disputes, and troubles of every kind. Could it have been otherwise, had such a division existed before? Or could there have been such a division, for so many ages, without its leaving a single trace, of any dispute or controversy, or historic fact, that might prove its existence? The nature of the case, the nature of the human mind, the experience of the world, forbid that any thinking man should entertain so preposterous a supposition.

3. There remains, then, only the third supposition, the only possible, and the only true one: the beginning of the dispute marks the beginning of a division, and the introduction of a novelty. Until St. Bernard's time the fathers treated of the matter only incidentally, and then without emphasis, or effort at precision. They never dwelt on it, discussed it, or hinted any possible difference, simply because no difference existed. They had no discussions because they had only *one opinion*; and we have already shown, from the very words in which the dispute commences, that the *one opinion* was that "the Virgin was conceived in original sin." Such John Scot pronounces the *common sentiment*, from which he ventures to dissent; so that, during all those ages when there was no dispute, the whole world was united in the acknowledgment of the Blessed Virgin's conception in sin; that is to say, in the doctrine taught by St. Anselm, and by St. Bernard, and by the school divines themselves during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and at the beginning of the fourteenth.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PROGRESS OF THE DOCTRINE PROVES ITS NOVELTY.

*I.—Its rapid career. II.—The affair of Jean de Montson.*

I. Once started by Doctor Scot, as we have seen, the sentiment of the immaculate conception gained great headway, in less than one century. The Dominicans learned this, by sad experience, in 1388, in the affair of John de Montson. But in this rapid progress of the delusion, there is nothing surprising, when we reflect upon the popularity of anything which seems to contribute to the honor of St. Mary. This very *progress*, however, affords the clearest evidence of its novelty. It was not only in the fourteenth century that the Catholic faithful began to entertain devout(*a*) feelings towards the Virgin. On the contrary, from the very first ages of the Gospel, a tender and lively sentiment for this Virgin of virgins was a trait of true

(*a*) If nothing more is meant, here, than that the Blessed Virgin was always held in *honor* among Christians, it is very true. But perhaps the *Abbé Laborde* himself is not aware how little there is to justify even the degree of devotion which he himself would yield to her, in the records of antiquity. The sentiment of the primitive Church was rightly announced, by St. Epiphanius, in the fifth century: "Let Mary be *honored*; let no one *worship* *ary*."—*Tr.*

Christian character. Consequently, the enthusiasm which greeted this doctrine of the conception in the fourteenth century, would not have been deferred to this late epoch, had the doctrine been known before. Rather, had it been taught by the pastors and doctors of the primitive faithful, it must have been universal, at this late period, and so could not possibly have been marked by the successive stages of *progress*, however rapid and enthusiastic. So that, as it had waited till then to become accredited among believers, we must conclude that it had never before been proposed to them.

II. As I have made an illusion to *Jean de Montson*, I must add a few words concerning this Dominican friar, lest it should be said that I willingly overlooked it. This monk having advanced, among divers bad propositions, on various subjects, that "it is expressly contrary to the faith to say that the Blessed Virgin was exempted from all stain of original sin," this proposition was condemned, with the others, by the Sorbonne. The bishop of Evreux, who, a year later, chose to adopt the same proposition, and to speak against the censure of the university, was also obliged, by the academics, to retract his expressions. At the same time, the Dominicans, having refused to unite in the condemnation of their *confrère*, found themselves expelled from the university, while this fact covered them with so much popular odium, that they could not collect the ordinary alms of the people, and were even regarded as a *sectarian* community. (b)

And yet the condemnation of John de Montson is no reason for supposing that the schools had as yet changed, on this point, the doctrine delivered by their founders.

(b) Fleury, book xcvi. n. 45.



In fact, the university gave proof of this, in the tractate which they laid before the pope to meet the accusations of the Dominicans, who had charged them with opposing the doctrine of St. Thomas.(c) The university argued that although *Jean de Montson's* propositions had been condemned, they had pronounced no judgment which conflicted with St. Thomas.(d) Besides, all this occurred a century and more before the period when divers universities adopted the opinion of the immaculate conception, and when the sentiment become common.

(c) Fleury, tom. xiv. *Dis prélim.* art. 18

(d) The point seems to be that Jean de Montson was condemned for a mass of bad opinions, of which the above was only one; and that this was *bad*, because so much more sweeping than St. Thomas' assertions on the point; so that the including of it, with others, in a *general censure*, was no departure from the doctrine of St Thomas.—Tr.

## CHAPTER X.

THE FRIENDS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION ARE  
THEMSELVES WITNESSES TO ITS MODERN ORIGIN AND  
PROGRESS.

I.—*The Père Amelote.* II.—*The conclusion that the sentiment became  
common only in the sixteenth century.*

I. It is now time to complete our statement of facts, by the testimony of our opponents themselves, and to gather from their own representations the date of its general reception. Let us then first cite the Père Amelote, who has brought to the defence of his cause both talent and erudition.

After showing how the Faculty of Theology, at Paris, enlisted in support of the immaculate conception in 1469 and 1497, this celebrated Oratorian thus continues: "The year following, the University of Cologne imitated that of Paris, and the University of Mayence, in 1501, even added an oath, not to reserve in the mind, nor in any manner to favor, the contrary opinion. Subsequently, their example was followed by the Universities of Valence, of Urso in Andalusia, of Barcelona, of Tubingen, and others; by entire diocesan synods, by chapters, by cities, and by kingdoms, till imperceptibly the persuasion diffused itself throughout the world." (a)

(a) *Abrégé de la Theol.* liv. vi. cap. 43.

This eloquent father of the Oratory seems to persuade himself that after his splendid array of facts, and so many fine words, it must be impossible for any one to resist the reception of his own opinion as an article of faith. He forgets, that in the transport of his enthusiasm, he has thrown himself into a snare, and that instead of gaining credit for the sentiment, he has furnished an implement for its destruction, by demonstrating its novelty. Thus, he shows, that it was subsequent to 1501 that this persuasion became diffused throughout the world! Very good—but then, it is evident that, previously, the whole world was a stranger to any such idea. An opinion can *gain* a diffusion only, there, where it never existed before. If the University of Cologne adopted the opinion “a year after that of Paris,” then the University of Cologne had not previously taught it. “In the latter part of the year 1501, the Universities of Mayence, Valence, Urso, Barcelona,” etc., gave in their adhesion; from which we gather that previously to the sixteenth century, this opinion had not been the doctrine of said universities! After the example of these dioceses it was acknowledged by synods, chapters, cities, kingdoms, &c.; from which it appears that previously it was unknown to these synods, chapters, cities and kingdoms. A complete inversion, verily, of all ordinary processes of reasoning, *(b)* is this parade of the progress of a fashionable opinion, got up as it is to carry away the ignorant, by imposing on their imaginations.

II. In the conclusion of his historical review, the Père

*(b)* In the primitive Council of Nice the process of establishing doctrine was the very reverse of that employed by the *Père Amelote*. If a doctrine could be shown to have any other history than universal consent, *from the beginning*, it was, on that very account, judged to be a *profane novelty*.—*Tr.*

Amelote breaks forth as follows: "who can forbear the conviction, that a doctrine so inquisitively studied, *so long opposed through centuries, by the most learned divines*, so prudently examined by divers popes and councils, among which is numbered a council (that of Trent) in which the fathers assembled, with a few exceptions only, were in favor of defining it as an article of the faith, could have so generally diffused itself through the whole Church, but for the influence of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in it and governs it!"

If the Père Amelote were still living, I could not forbear to introduce to his notice a reflection of a very different sort. "Forgive me, pious father," I should reply, "but I cannot but think that if the Holy Spirit had been, as you suppose, the author of the doctrine, its diffusion throughout the Church universal, would scarcely have been postponed till the sixteenth century of the Christian era!"

The Holy Ghost who dwells in the Church and governs it, has never been destitute of the power, or the will, or the means, of establishing, in the earth, the knowledge of the entire truth of God. It would seem, however, from the logic of the worthy father, that it was not till the sixteenth century, that the Spirit of Truth so cherished the faith of the Church, as to enrich it with a dogma, which is now regarded as of such vast importance to true religion. Besides, it must be allowed that, on these grounds, the primitive ages, and the blessed apostles themselves, were singularly unhappy.

If, however, the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, was the original of this diffusion and establishment of the doctrine of the immaculate conception, how comes it that His holy presence at the Council of Constance, did not secure it, when the pious Garson proposed it, as well as

the immaculate conception of St. Joseph?(c) The occasion was so propitious! Still more so, however, was that of Trent, where a plurality of voices was in favor of the decree. According to Père Amelote, there were *only a few exceptions*, to the general wish of the assembled fathers, that the conception of the Holy Virgin should be pronounced immaculate. Why then was it not done? How happens it, on the contrary, that the Bishop of Clermont, who loudly called for the decree, in full congregation, and in solemn session, was not listened to, and that the Council stopped short, in the determination to *decide nothing on the subject*, to give no advantage to either side of the dispute, and to leave it open? The worthy father believes that the Holy Ghost, who dwells in, and governs the Church, was present, and governing that Council! What then must we conclude as to the point at which the HOLY SPIRIT would have us stop, in professing our faith as to the conception of the Virgin?

As I cannot address these remonstrances to the pious Oratorian himself, I beg to present them to those who employ a similar line of argument. If they are really willing to learn from history, they will not fail to find much, even in the Council of Trent, to qualify their favorite assertions as to the disposition of the members of that Council towards the definition of the immaculate conception.(d) But Père Amelote himself has somewhat exaggerated, when his eloquence led him to say that the sentiment was spread through the entire Church, and established itself everywhere in the world. He forgets, that

(c) Fleury, liv. ciii. n. 206.

(d) This may be seen by the historical note, at the end of the work.—TR.

*the entire order of St. Dominic* was sustained in peaceable possession of the contrary belief, and that, to this day, there are, in every part of the world, bishops, doctors, priests, and faithful laymen, who continue to hold with them. All that results from his facts, then, is what nobody denies, viz : that since the sixteenth century, the opinion of the immaculate conception has become a common one among theologians.

## CHAPTER XI.

### CONFIRMATION OF THE FOREGOING HISTORY.

I.—*Testimony of Habert.* II.—*A full confirmation of the statements foregoing.*

I. LET us see how Habert expresses himself in maintaining his side of the question: "Our opinion," says he, "took such strong hold of public favor, four hundred years ago, that is to say, at the commencement of the fourteenth century, when Scot, in treating of the third of the Sentences,(a) proposed it as probable that in the year 1385, the University of Paris condemned the proposition of Montson,(b) and censured it, after this manner: "This proposition should be retracted as false, scandalous, rash, presumptuous, and offensive to pious ears." And further, the Bishop of Evreux, William of the Order of St. Dominic, having ventured, in the following year, to defend the proposition of Jean de Montson, was forced, by the prosecution of the same University, to retract what he had said in opposition to the censure of the Faculty. The same Faculty, going further in 1497, passed a decree that thence-

(a) That is Peter Lombard's "Sentences."—Tr.

(b) The proposition was: "It is expressly contrary to the faith to say that the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, was untainted by original sin."—Tr.

forth no person should be admitted to the degree of doctor, without obliging himself beforehand, by solemn oath, to sustain this doctrine. Subsequently, a like step was taken by the Universities of Cologne and Mayence, in Germany, and by Salamanca, Toleda and Alcala, with others, in Spain. And more, many eminent persons of the Society of St. Dominic, such as Noël Hervée, Master General, in the fourteenth century, St. Vincent Ferrier, Dominic Soto, Ambrose Catharin, and many others, adopted the same sentiment, and *thus it became common.*"(c)

Such is the history of the dogma, as traced by a hand, than which none can be more favorable. And what is his representation? He sets the beginning of this career of progress at the commencement of the fourteenth century; mentions that the first doctor who put it into the form of thesis, and maintained it, was Scot, the subtile doctor; that he proposed it at first, not affirmatively, but only as *probable* opinion; that it was already nearly the close of the fifteenth century when the Faculty of the Sorbonne supported it entire; that it was not until the sixteenth century that it was adopted by several other universities of Europe, obtained the suffrages of some few Dominicans, and so became at last, and by such a process, a *common* sentiment. *Sicque evasit communis*; "and so it became common," says this author! But let it be observed in what form it was embraced, even then, by these theologians and faculties! Not as an article of faith, not as a known truth, but as a sentiment of piety.(d)

As to Noël Hervée, however, it may be well to mention that Estius(e) affirms that he taught the contrary doctrine,

(c) Habert de vit. et peccat. c. vii. § 6.

(d) See historical note, at the end of volume.—Tr.

(e) The learned Chancellor of the Romish University at Douay. *Comment.* on 2 Cor. v. 14.—Tr.



founding his teaching upon St. Augustine. For, quoting St. Augustine's City of God, (Lib. xx. cap. 6,) Hervée says—"So then all are dead in sin original, if not actual also, and that, absolutely, without exception of any body : *nemine prorsus excepto.*" Although to these words of Hervée is added an exception in the words, *unless it be the Mother of God*, Estius maintains that it is the interpolation of a strange hand,(f) contrary to the spirit of the author, and repugnant to the sense of the context. *Melchior Cano* cites St. Vincent Ferrier, also, as supporting the direct contrary of what is here attributed to him.

II. Finally, let us hear Perrone's account of the progress of the novelty. "Meanwhile," says he, "Scot made his appearance, a man of most subtile intellect, who, in the midst of this great celebrity of the Parisian School of the Sorbonne, according to the common account, sustained so valiantly against the doctors of Paris, this pious opinion, that *thenceforth* it was gradually received, by the suffrage of almost all the schools, and *became, at last, common.*" Again—"Soon after, the dispute grew more furious in the schools, because the opinion, which denies the original sin of the Blessed Virgin, prevailed more and more every day, and extended further and further ; so that, the Faculty of the Sorbonne, *which had previously opposed it*, adopted it, and made it its own teaching. The Franciscans attached to the school of Scot, undertook its defence, as peculiarly their own. On the other hand, however, those who obstinately clung to the affirmative proposition, (that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in sin,) of whom the greater part were

(f) This is important, as showing, on high Romish authority, that liberties have been taken with Schoolmen, as well as with the Fathers, to make them suit the purposes of this pestilent heresy. Hervée wrote in the fourteenth century.—Ta.

Dominicans, fought, with not less zeal, for their side of the question."

"The contest, however, was not equally maintained, for the pious sentiment soon penetrated *nearly* all the Catholic Universities, and *became common*. Even opponents were converted, in no small numbers, and became enlisted under the banner of the Virgin's privilege; the sentiment reaching even to the masses, and imbuing the minds of the faithful, far and wide." He reports that the General of the Dominicans, gave in his adhesion, in the name of his Order, in 1843, scarcely eight years ago, and adds: "Such has been the end of this controversy, which, after taking its rise, in very feeble beginnings, has made, by the lapse of a long series of ages, after so many oppositions and disputes, such progress, that the pious sentiment, fortifying itself, year by year, more and more, has become the prevailing opinion of the Church, and is now sustained and recognized, by consent *all but* unanimous and universal."(*g*)

Such, then, is the account of the theologian, who is, in our day, the most remarkable supporter of the *immaculate conception*. Let us examine his avowals, and what they import.

1. The sentiment we are discussing has only reached its present dominant position in the Church, step by step, little by little, more and more, year by year, starting from a definite epoch! What more can we ask, to assure ourselves, therefore, that it is no article of apostolic authority? Every thing that is apostolic, may be found existing in all time, and established from the beginning, in all the Churches of the world; and the reason is, that the apostles faithfully fulfilled their mission, and obeyed the formal

and solemn command of Christ, to preach, all of them, everywhere, the same faith, and the entire faith :—"teaching them to observe, and to do, all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

2. The controversy, moreover, "took its rise in very feeble beginnings." What, then, are these *feeble beginnings*? Doubtless, those of which Padre Perrone himself speaks, when he narrates what followed John Scot's first proposal of the doctrine. Recalling the fact that the opinion took its birth in the teaching, and from the pen of this doctor, and that this doctor began only with a circumspection the most timid, and proposed it merely as a thing which *seemed congruous*, he may well speak of "feeble beginnings."

3. He further allows that it is *thenceforth*—from the time of Scot—that the opinion of the immaculate conception was adopted as the opinion of his *confrères* the Franciscans, obtained gradually the suffrages of other theologians, spread itself among the people, penetrated, one after the other, divers universities, and *became common*!

Such, then, is the history of the opinion, Perrone himself being witness. Adopting his own account, I ask then, of Padre Perrone, *where was his doctrine before John Scot*? It was not in that most famous of all the Faculties, that of the University of Paris; for he expressly says, they were previously opposed to the doctrine. It existed not among the other scholastics, for there the contrary opinion reigned, as we have seen, "owing to the authority of St. Bernard and St. Anselm." It was not among the Dominicans, for they remained strongly opposed to it, always, down to 1843.<sup>(h)</sup> Nor yet was it among the Franciscans, for he

(h) It may be doubted whether the consent of the General of the Dominicans was authorized by the Order; as it is said, the Domi-

tells us they espoused its defence, out of *esprit de corps*, taking it as their pet opinion, only after it had been sustained by their associate John Scot, because he was the glory of their Society. No more was it to be found among the theological faculties of Europe, for he says they took it up, by degrees, and during the lapse of time, after Scot's day. It could not have obtained among the secular clergy,<sup>(i)</sup> for they formed their teaching after St. Anselm, St. Bernard, the school doctors, and the Faculties. Finally, it was not among the laity, for he himself professes, that it extended to the multitude at a later date, reaching and imbuing their hearts and minds, year after year, little by little.

Where then, I say again, according to Perrone himself, where was his doctrine before John Scot; since he owns it was not then in the Sorbonne at Paris, nor in the Faculties of Theology, nor among the Franciscans, nor among the Dominicans, nor among the Schoolmen, nor among the parish clergy, nor among the multitudes? Where was it? Plainly, NOWHERE.

nicans at Florence have resisted the dogmatic decree itself, and have been made to suffer for so doing. Rome knows how to *take* consent, when she can't win it.—Tr.

(i) That is, the parochial clergy.—Tr.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE TESTIMONY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

I.—*Passages against the Immaculate Conception prove it false.* II.—*Passages cited in its favor prove nothing.*

I. HOLY SCRIPTURE does not say that the Blessed Virgin was conceived without sin ; but it does say, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Here there is no exception, and the death to which the Blessed Virgin was made subject, in common with all the children of Adam, is proof to me that she shared, with others, in the sin of our first father. Scripture further says, that "the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick ;" now, the virgin had need of the medicine of the Gospel, therefore she was sick. Scripture teaches that "Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost." It does not say *what otherwise would have been lost*, but *what was already lost* ; that He "was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and that he was come, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." So then, seeing he came to seek, to call, and to save, even His Blessed Mother, it follows she too was lost.

Scripture teaches us that for the good and the just no one need die, and that "while we were yet sinners Christ

died for us," and our Lord, in instituting the Holy Eucharist, spoke of His blood as "shed for many, for the *remission of sins*." Who, then, will say that JESUS CHRIST did not die for His Blessed Mother? Who, that His blood was not shed for her? But if shed for her, it was for the remission of her sin; not for her *exemption* from taint of sin, but "for the *remission*" of her sin.

Scripture says that if any one be not "born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now the Blessed Virgin is regenerate, or she is not. If *regenerate*, then she was before in that state of nature which required that she should be born again; but if not *regenerate*, and born again of the Holy Ghost, what part has she in the grace of the Gospel, and how is Christ her Saviour? Scripture says, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The Blessed Virgin is born of the flesh, of course, because no one denies that she was begotten in the concupiscence of the two sexes: therefore she is, by nature, *flesh*, that is flesh infected with the sin, inseparable from flesh and blood, in its natural origin.

Scripture says, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." These two things are correlative, and affirmed of the same subjects. If so, the Blessed Virgin must be included among those *who die*, if we include her in the number of those who shall *be made alive*. Again, "if one died for all, then were all dead," and "Christ died for all to the end that those who live should henceforth live not unto themselves, but unto Him, who died for them and rose again." Is the Holy Virgin one of those for whom Christ died? Then is she one of those who were dead in sin; and who died unto sin, to rise again unto righteousness, and to live unto Him who died for them as

a similitude of their death to sin, and who rose again, as a similitude of their resurrection to righteousness. So the Fathers have expounded, and especially St. Augustine, as before noted.

Scripture says—"So many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death ; therefore we are buried with Him, by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life." Now, either this mystery of the death and burial, and resurrection of JESUS CHRIST was never accomplished in the Holy Virgin, as in all other Christians, without exception, and so, Christ neither died, nor was buried, nor rose again for her : or else, if we suppose her to have been sanctified by the grace of JESUS CHRIST, she did die unto sin, in the similitude of his death ; she was buried unto sin, in the similitude of His sepulture, and she did rise to newness of life, after the likeness of His resurrection. But she could not have died unto sin, provided she never was in sin ; she could not be buried in the baptism of the Holy Ghost, if she had no dead flesh to bury ; and how can she have risen to newness of life, if, not for one single instant, was she ever a partaker of the oldness of the life of Adam ? Finally, Scripture says—"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Either the Blessed Virgin was never planted with Christ, in the likeness of His resurrection, or she was also planted with Him in the likeness of His death, "being dead indeed unto sin."

II. On the other hand, those texts which are cited to sustain the immaculate conception, prove absolutely nothing at all. They do not even touch the matter. "Hail thou

that *art full of grace!*"(a) was indeed the salutation of the angel. She was, then, full of grace, at the time when this was uttered: but how long had she been so? Of that these words say nothing.

Just so of the text of the Canticles: "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee."(b) *How* and *how long* does he affirm this to have been? There lies the question, and it does not touch it. Besides, who is the beloved? These words are addressed, primarily, and in their literal sense, *to the Church*; and if so, they apply, not to the Virgin only, but to the blessed company of all the just. They are strictly true of all those who have died in their baptismal purity, and of all the holy dead, in paradise; they are true also, in prospective reality, of all those who are yet in the militant state. All such hear their Saviour, saying to them, as members of his body, "thou art fair, and well-beloved, and in thee is no spot, or blemish, that my blood does not wash away."

In the words which God speaks to the serpent in Genesis: "*She* shall bruise thy head," let us observe that the word *she* is properly *it*, referring to the seed of the woman, and not to the woman herself. The Hebrew and the Greek of the Septuagint so render it,(c) and the whole tradition of the Fathers so understands it. If, however, it be so rendered as to apply to the woman, and so to the Virgin, what then? *When* and *how* did she bruise the serpent's head? In vain do you seek anything in the text, that implies her doing it before she was born. It decides

(a) "Highly favored" in the English version. St. Luke i. 28.—  
TR.

(b) Cant. iv. 7.

(c) So does the English version, true to the original.—TR.



nothing: but the Fathers agree that this was done when she conceived and brought forth the Saviour of mankind.

If they cite other Scriptures, they are even less to the purpose than these.(d)

(d) Those who would like to see the other Scriptures adduced, may consult the "Memorial du Predicatur," by the Abbé Habert, vol. ii. p. 340. One or two of them are as follows:—(1.) "Which of you *convinceth me (CHRIST) of sin?*" (2.) "Take away his ungodliness, and *thou shalt find none.*" (3.) "My dove, my *undefiled.*" All the rest are *equally* convincing, but not one is more so.—TR.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CONCLUSION.

*I.—The immaculate conception being a novel opinion cannot be received as an article of faith. II.—Of the personal opinion of the sovereign pontiff.*

I. Let us conclude as we began. Tertullian has said, "It is not lawful for us to introduce anything of our private opinion, nor is it lawful for us to attach ourselves to anything introduced in this way, no matter by whom. We have, as the authors of our faith, the apostles of our Lord, who never took the liberty to introduce anything of their own mind, but who faithfully delivered to the nations, that which they had themselves received of JESUS CHRIST." Now it is demonstrated, irrefutably, in the preceding pages, that the immaculate conception is no part of the faith which the apostles delivered to the Church, but that it originated much later; that is to say, *twelve* centuries after their day, in a manner most obscure, at first, but thence advancing, by a progress of which every stage is visible. Such being the case, on the principle of Tertullian, *it is not lawful for us to receive it.* Above all, when proposed as an article of the faith, we should the rather reject it, because, to borrow the words in which an author of the last century gives a grand and faithful echo to the voice of

thunder which we have heard from Tertullian, "we ought to reject all pretended traditions based on false legends, or on private and new-fangled opinions; meaning by the term *new*, in this use of it, everything of which the origin is known to be subsequent to the times of the apostles." (a) This sound decision, is again based on those other sacramental words of Tertullian: "the nature of things itself makes it manifest that that comes from the Lord, and is true, which *was first delivered*, while that is strange and false, which *has been introduced more recently*—*verum quod sit prius traditum, id autem extraneum et falsum quod sit posterius immissum.*"

But here it will be said, that it is, in our day, the sentiment of all the bishops. I know nothing about that. (b) But as it is of a proposed article of faith that we are now speaking, it is of little consequence what may be the ideas of contemporary bishops. Decrees of faith must rest, not on any accumulation of opinions, at a given time, but upon the manifest perpetuity of the dogma. If you would have me yield such homage to the opinions of the bishops, let me see these reverend fathers bearing witness to the ancient faith of the Church, and not merely announcing their private sentiments. Let me see them, one and all, if they can do it, laying their hands on the Holy Evangelists, and swearing that when they received their respective charges in the flock of Christ, and when they first received ordina-

(a) Fleury. *Diss. v. Sur l'histoire Eccl.* xiii.

(b) The Roman Episcopate being an *enslaved* episcopate, nobody knows what may be the real sentiments of the very bishops who attended the great show of December 8, 1854, at Rome. Every one of them knew, as did the bishops at Trent, that to utter a word against the known policy and views of the pope, would be to destroy himself—ecclesiastically, if not in life and fortune.—*Tr.*

tion, they found not only in their own particular dioceses, but universal in the Church, the belief in the immaculate conception, as a part of the faith revealed, necessary to salvation, and not to be gainsaid without mortal sin. Let me hear them say of this doctrine, solemnly, and without equivocation, the canonical formula: "*Hæc est fides Petri, et apostolorum; hæc est fides patrum; hæc est fides orthodoxorum* : this is the faith of Peter and the apostles; this is the faith of the fathers; this the faith of orthodox believers." Can they do it? How many, to this day, have ventured to bear such witness as this to the immaculate conception? Not a single one. In all that concerns the faith, JESUS CHRIST has made the bishops depositories merely—as it is written, "keep that which is committed to thy trust." By this commission, they can only transmit to their flocks, and to their successors, as *of the faith*, that which they have received from their predecessors as *of the faith*, and nothing more. As to that large class of matters called school opinions, *pious sentiments*, private opinions, and the like, if the bishops, as individuals, choose to give their suffrages for this or that, it is their own affair; but, as for impressing upon the merest babe in their dioceses, any obligation to believe anything whatever, over and above this sacred deposit of the faith, which has come to them by handing-down from the apostles, and by the apostles from Jesus Christ, and by Jesus Christ from God the Father—they cannot do it.(c) The bishops of the

(c) Would to God this were true! It is true in the Anglo-Catholic Church—but over and above the Nicene Creed, the papal bishops are empowered to impose the Creed of Pius IV., of which no trace can be found in the purest antiquity, and almost every article of which is as fabulous as the immaculate conception.—Tr.

nineteenth century are bound to do as did their predecessors. And how did the Fathers act in such matters? Let St. Augustine teach us: "That which they found established in the Church, they preserved: that which they learned, they taught; that which they received from the fathers, they handed down to the children: *quod invenerunt, tenuerunt; quod didicerunt, docuerunt; quod a patribus acceperunt, hoc filiis tradiderunt.*"(d) The bishops of our day did not find in the Church the dogma of the immaculate conception, neither will they communicate it; they were not taught such a dogma, neither will they teach it to others; they have not received it from the fathers, and they will never transmit it to the children.

II. But they will still answer me: "How if the pope should define it?" The pope, I allow, has all the powers that St. Peter had, but he has no more.(e) St. Peter himself could not make a new dogma. Tertullian once more: "The apostles (among them St. Peter) introduced nothing of their own private wills, or personal devotion, into the faith of the Church, but they faithfully delivered to the nations, that which also they had received." And Jesus Christ himself taught nothing that he had not received from the Father: "My doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me." The successors of the apostles, and more than all the successors of St. Peter, are bound to the doctrine of the apostles, as were the apostles to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Consequently, (the popes, as well as the bishops,) what they have found established, they have kept:

(d) *Cantra Julian. lib. ii. n. 34.*

(e) Let the pope cease to "lord it over God's heritage," as St. Peter himself commands, and be to the Church what St. Peter was, and there will be no hesitation as to honoring him.—*Tr.*

what they have learned they have taught; what they have received they have transmitted." Here then is the rule which binds the sovereign pontiff himself. We have confidence that he will not break such bonds.(f)

Finally, there is no well-instructed Catholic, who can, even if he would, make an act of theological faith upon any other basis than that of a revealed word of God. Now, it is a principle that for every revealed word of God, we have the apostles of our Lord as authors, and that we can not hear any others. But then it is irrefragably proved that the doctrine in question never made any part of the revealed word, as preached by the apostles. So then, no well-instructed Catholic can ever, in truth and in conscience, make, upon it, an act of theological faith, and say—"Oh, God, I firmly believe that the Blessed Virgin was conceived without original sin, because *Thou hast said it*; because thy Church has *always believed it*; and because the Church now believes it, and commands me to believe it as revealed by thee, who art the sovereign Truth, and canst not possibly deceive us."

(S) The Abbe has not studied the history of the Trent dogmas as faithfully as he has the history of the immaculate conception, or he would have had less confidence in popes. Their sin has been that they have never been faithful depositaries of the truth. They have always been adding to the faith.—Tr.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE ABSURD CONSEQUENCES OF A DECREE IN FAVOR OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AS A DOGMA.

I.—*As to development.* II.—*The dogma once created, there will no longer be to us one faith—nor will the sum of our dogmas be truly Catholic and apostolic.*

I. Here I am accused of an unfortunate oversight, to wit, of the fundamental principle, "that the doctrine of the Church is subject to development." There is, however, neither truth, nor the shadow of a reason for such a charge, whether in what follows, or in the whole book. I say not a word to justify it.

I well know that doctrine may be developed, and that in divers ways. First, as it is written in the Acts: "And the word of God increased and was multiplied." Doctrine may, again, be developed in the sense of declaring it in clear and express terms, which may the better commend it to universal comprehension, or of defining it, by expressions so precise as to clip the subtilities and dissipate the fogs of equivocation with which heresy may have enveloped truth. Only in this sense is it that the dogma of the divinity of the Word was *developed* at Nice against the Arians; the unity of person in JESUS CHRIST, at Ephesus, against Nestorius; the two natures, at Chalcedon, against

Eutyches; and the change of substance in the eucharist, against the Protestants at Trent.(a) Again, dogma may be developed by explaining circumstantial truths more fully in detail; as, for example, the mystery of the Holy Trinity is developed in the symbol of St. Athanasius. Finally, dogma may be developed in such wise as that verities of faith which were contained implicitly and tacitly in other truths, may be drawn out in distinct terms, and defined by themselves expressly. For example, the truth that the Blessed Virgin is indeed the Deipara, or Mother God, was contained in the saying that she was the mother of JESUS CHRIST—JESUS CHRIST being truly God. It was merely drawn forth, and more expressly defined by the Council of Ephesus.(b) Thus, then, may doctrine be developed.(c)

(a) This, no doubt, the Abbé Laborde honestly believes; but his translator would be happy of a chance to show him that not an argument does he bring against the fable of the immaculate conception, which does not bear against the fable of transubstantiation. Besides, in no respect can the primitive councils be compared with that of Trent, except in perfect contrast; and, in short, it was the Council of Trent which confounded the *development* with the *corruption* of Christian doctrine, and so prepared the way for the introduction of the pestilent and cancerous dogma which the Abbé deplures. He states the true idea of *development*, but the Church of Rome repudiated it, at Trent, and it is in vain that the Gallicans have ever since tried to deceive themselves with the idea that the testimony of antiquity has any weight with popes and cardinals.—Tr.

(b) But in the use of the word *Theotocos*, the Council of Ephesus avoided a startling paradox, always painful to the unlearned, but which the Romanists seem to delight in, when they speak of the "Mother of God," an expression not authorized by the Council. The Latin *Deipara* is unexceptionable and strictly correct.—Tr.

(c) Thus the *Nicene Creed* is a genuine *development* of the Apostles' Creed; it is contained in the latter, impliedly.—Tr.



But in all these cases of development there was no introduction of a new thing. Nothing was dogma after the definition, which was not dogma before. Nothing was necessary to be believed afterwards which was not necessary previously. The Church declared and defined the dogma, just because the obligation to believe it had always been imperative. Thus the Council of Nice, when it condemned Arius, did not erect, against him, as an article of faith, an opinion taken from popular impressions at the time, but which had always been open and controverted freely : but it declared against him the dogma which the Church had *always* believed. In fact, had not the same Arius, long before the Council of Nice, been condemned and banished from the Church at Alexandria, which he served as presbyter, by his Bishop, St. Alexander ? But certainly St. Alexander would not thus have treated him for simply denying a *pious opinion*, as they say now-a-days, or had he not denied the Catholic Faith. The same is true of Nestorius, Eutyches, and all other heretics. It is obvious that the Church commences process against them, only when they deny something which was an article of faith before it was denied, which it was always their duty to believe, and a mortal sin not to admit, or to reject. Now, it must be evident, that the Church, in condemning, and defining against them, merely avenges her ancient truth ; her essential and necessary truth, which existed before them, and of which they undertook the overthrow. (*d*)

(*d*) This clear statement of the office of a Council, precisely what is held by Anglicans, is now formally repudiated by the pope ; who claims powers which no Council (except such as the pseudo-Council of Trent) ever claimed ; the power, that is, of making that true which was not true before, and of making neces-

Now, the case of the immaculate conception is very different. At the very moment in which I am now writing, it is agreed that we may *lawfully* contest and reject the opinion of this privilege, no matter how many hold it. To this date, all theologians admit, with one accord, that no such opinion is matter of faith; they pronounce, freely, as we have seen, that it "is not of faith," "does not pertain to it," "is not included in the sum of the Faith," and that the Church is, as to this privilege, indifferent. It is therefore not taught by the Church, either as expressly revealed, or as logically involved in any other dogma; she commands no one to believe it, does not enumerate it with her points of doctrine necessary to religion and salvation, takes no action against those who refuse to accept it, and accuses them of no sin. The word *dogma*, according to Bergier, means "a truth which God has revealed, and which we are bound to believe." The immaculate conception is no such verity, hence no dogma to this day. What follows? Nothing less than this, viz:

1. The day when the immaculate conception shall be defined as of faith, as part of the faith, as belonging to its sum and substance, it will no longer be the ancient faith developed, but the ancient faith with the addition of something alien and novel.

2. The day when the Church shall begin to teach, for the first time, that the immaculate conception is revealed of God, and consequently to ordain it as of divine and theological faith, and to count it as one of the things necessary

sary to salvation, a doctrine which, before, Saints themselves have freely denied and contemned! How strange that *Labord* should be for us, and *Newman* against us.—Tr.

to religion and salvation, it will have adopted not a development of ancient truth, but a *new dogma*.

So then, there is no dispute between us as to the development of any old dogma ; it concerns the introduction of a new one. Such a dogma is *impossible*. The Church itself can not make such a dogma. "The Church," says Ber- gier, "teaches us with infallible certainty what are the doc- trines revealed by God, but she can not create a new doc- trine."

Not forgetting, then, that the Church may develop what is already her doctrine, but remembering that it is impossible for her to add anything that is new, I proceed to remind others of this fact, and to demonstrate this impos- sibility, by showing the absurdities which must result from making the immaculate conception an article of the faith. I am sure that I proceed on solid grounds, and I shall retain that assurance, until some one can establish the fact that my reasonings are false.

II. We all believe, then, that the Catholic faith is essen- tially one. *Una fides*—says St. Paul, "one Lord, one *Faith*." Well, suppose the immaculate conception becomes a dogma—we shall no longer have the *one faith*. *This* will have been the faith previous to 1854, and *that* subse- quently. Before 1854, how many fundamental mysteries does the Roman Catholic Church believe? *Three*; viz : the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the mystery of the Incar- nation, the mystery of Redemption. After 1854, how many? *Four*; the fourth being the mystery of the immac- ulate conception of the Blessed Virgin.(e)

(e) Mark this—such is now the case. Where is the ancient faith, then? The Anglican Church holds all the apostolic doc- trines, and nothing more.—Tb.

We call our faith the Catholic faith, to distinguish it from what is not such. Thenceforth, *we can no longer do so.* (f) For *Catholic* means that which is of *all ages*, as well as of *all places*. Now plainly, our faith will be no longer *Catholic*, when any one of its dogmas shall have had no existence prior to 1854.

A third note of the faith is its *apostolic* character. Thenceforth it can no longer be our boast that our faith is apostolic—that is, *derived from the apostles*; seeing, one portion of it never was such, till eighteen hundred years after the apostles' death!

This dogma once defined, we shall no longer be able to make good the argument of *prescription* against all sorts of heresies. From that day, in fact, there will not be a heretic, of any sort now existing, who cannot truly reply to us, that *his heresy is at least more ancient than part of our faith!* The existing faith will no longer be a proof, nor even a presumptive evidence, of what was the faith of past ages. The tradition of all our dogmas will become unsteady from the moment that a single one can be shown to have commenced as a mere opinion, introduced first as a *probable* sentiment, by scholastics, thence diffused among the people, and lastly defined, although it was neither established nor revealed by God, from the beginning. (g)

(f) Mark this! The Roman faith no longer *Catholic* on the admission of a Romanist.—Tr.

(g) But this was done at Trent. Every dogma there defined, which is contrary to the doctrine of the Anglican Church, can be shown to have had a history substantially the same with that of the immaculate conception; and nothing but the fact that they were defined by (what claims to have been) a Council, disguises this truth, and prevents the Abbé from seeing it. The Council of Trent, however, was a mere phantom—the pope being its absolute master.—Tr.

But everything in the Church rests upon tradition as defined by the inspired maxim; "Remove not the old landmarks which your fathers have set." For us, *this principle hereafter will have no existence*. The bounds of the faith will have been obliterated: after *eighteen hundred and fifty years*, its enclosure will contain what the fathers never placed there.

The immaculate conception, once adopted as a dogma, the infallibility of the Roman Catholic Church *can no longer be defended*. On this supposition, it will either be a matter of faith, or it will not. If the former, where is the infallibility of a Church, which for eighteen hundred and fifty years never taught such a dogma, never commanded its reception, never professed it? But if the latter supposition be resorted to, where is the infallibility of a Church, which pronounces anything a *verity of the faith* which is not so.

It is then impossible that the Church should ever pronounce the immaculate conception as its faith, as its doctrine.<sup>(h)</sup> As to private individuals who burn to erect their personal views into a dogma necessary to true religion, let them take to themselves the following language, which precisely suits their case, taken from St. Jerome:<sup>(i)</sup> "Thou that bringest new doctrines, whoever thou art, I beseech you, spare the ears of men, spare the faith they have received from the lips of apostles! Why after *four hundred years* (rather after eighteen hundred years) do you

(h) But, A. D. 1854, this was done by the Pope! What then? The Abbé and a few other good men will deny that the pope is the Church. Alas! that is true, but the Trentine Church dares not say so, and the Abbé will be excommunicated.—Tr.

(i) Ep. lxxv.

presume to teach that which we have never known before? Why publish, and ask us to accept that which was never published by St. Peter and St. Paul? The world has been Christian, heretofore, without any such doctrine. I WILL HAVE NO FAITH NOW THAT I AM OLD AND GRAY-HEADED INTO WHICH I WAS NOT BAPTIZED WHEN I WAS A CHILD."

*Dominus Deus aspiciet veritatem et consolabitur in nobis.(j) Amen.*

(j) Maccab. Book 2. vii. 6.

## HISTORICAL NOTES.

### I.—WHAT TOOK PLACE AT THE COUNCIL OF TRENT.

1. It is one thing to approve of the doctrine of the immaculate conception as a sentiment, or, as it is the fashion to say, as a "pious opinion;" and quite another to adopt it as a public dogma of religion, to derive its definition as such, and to impose it upon the consciences of others. Now without inquiring how far it may be true that the Trent fathers approved it as an opinion, which is of little moment, it is evident that a very small number indeed, were of a mind to make it an article of faith. This appears from what took place at the Fifth Session, and at the General Congregation which preceded it. Here is what history supplies concerning it:

"June 16, 1546, a *General Congregation* was held in which were read over the decrees which were to be promulgated next day in the Session. They began with the decree concerning *original sin*, which they divided into five anathemas, etc. In the *first four* they condemned the opinions of the Zuinglians, and in the *fifth*, those of Luther. All were agreed except as to the second article, on which a dispute arose between the Dominicans and Franciscans, touching the language of the article, which included the entire human race in the sin of Adam. Some wished an exemption to be introduced in favor of the Vir

gin, and besides the Franciscans, Cardinal Pacheco held the same view, and so did two Jesuits, Jacques Laynez and Alphonse Salmeron. The cardinal wished to add to the decree that the Council did not pretend to decide anything as to the Blessed Virgin, although they firmly believed that she was conceived without original sin. Many of the prelates assented, but other bishops, and all those who were of the order of St. Dominic, sustained the contrary; that is, they simply demanded that it should be declared in general terms, without exception, that the corruption of Adam passed upon all mankind, so that the Virgin should be included. They remonstrated, that by declaring the opinion of the immaculate conception, a *pious* opinion, their own opinion would be subjected to the stigma of impiety.

“But the Council, not choosing to espouse either sentiment, or to give advantage to either of the parties, by condemning one of them, agreed to let things remain undetermined. However, as everybody was trying to slip in something that should discountenance the sentiments opposed to his own, the pope’s legates, following the advice of the Bishop of Astorga, advised the insertion in the decree, after the five Canons, an expression of the unwillingness of the Council, to define anything on that point, at that time, only that the Constitutions of Sixtus IV. must be observed. Some demanded, that it should be subjoined, that nobody should be permitted to speak against the immaculate conception, and the Archbishop of Aix was for forbidding all talk on the subject, whether in its favor or against it. The Bishops of Cagliari and Sassari were for forbidding all discussion of it, in the pulpit, and in sermons. Certain it is, that this exception appears in the edition of the Conciliar Acts, issued at Milan, 1548; and



Catharin, who was present at the Council, and whose work upon the matter, appeared at Rome in 1551, testifies that this exception was unanimously received. Dominic Soto, another Dominican, in his Commentary on the *Fifth of Romans*, published in 1550, also recognizes this exception, as having been received, and put into the decree, concerning original sin."

2. After having reported the decrees, which were solemnly published in the *Fifth Session*, the historian continues: "These decrees were read and approved by the majority, but there were those who made difficulties, with respect to certain points. On the first, for example, which concerned the conception of the Holy Virgin, the Cardinal de Jaën desired that it might be added, *as the greater portion of the Church piously believes, or as many believe that the Blessed Virgin was not conceived in original sin*. The Archbishop of Aix was for keeping silence, and forbidding to preach on this matter. The Bishop of Sassari said that this article displeased the one party, without satisfying the other, and that it threatened the Church with a renewal of the old quarrels which existed in the time of the bull of Sixtus IV., mentioned in the decree. The Bishop of Sienna consented to the decree, if it did not prejudice the cause of the Virgin. The Bishop of Palermo approved it, on the conditions proposed by the Cardinal de Jaën. Cava persisted in his views, expressed on the 16th of June. Clermont insisted that the Blessed Virgin should be declared, positively, free from original sin. The titular Bishop of Cheronæa agreed with Sienna. St. Mark agreed with de Jaën. Calahorra delivered his views in writing, signifying his approval of the decree, provided it should be added to this effect, viz: that whereas many preachers presumed to maintain, in their sermons, that the Blessed

Mary was not conceived in original sin, causing great scandals among the faithful, it should no longer be permitted to maintain this doctrine publicly, until it be decided by the Church, while nevertheless, the Council does not mean to condemn the opinion. Otherwise, he did not approve the decree as it stood. Castellamare said that something should be added to the article of the conception which should abate the scandal, without prejudice to either party. All the suffrages were collected by the Secretary, Massarel, but as the majority thought that nothing should be altered, the decree passed.”(a)

So then, the great majority of the Trent Fathers were not willing, even to pronounce in favor of the *immaculate conception*, although a plurality were in favor of it, as a pious opinion ; so entirely were they disinclined to declare it a dogma of faith. Nor were there wanting some of them who longed to see the opinion done away.

## II.—WHAT THE OPINION OF THEOLOGIAN WHO FAVOR THE DOCTRINE AMOUNTS TO.

1. Let it be observed on what grounds the theologians of the latter ages have embraced and held the opinion of the immaculate conception. Was it as an article of faith ? By no means. “This, however, does not touch the faith,” says Noel Alexandre. He repeats it in the margin. So, Bossuet, in the project of reunion, says smartly, to the protestants—“No difficulty on this point; not merely a party, but the entire Roman Catholic Church holds that the immaculate conception is *an indifferent matter, in no*

(a) Fleury, tome xix. pp. 170, 171.

*wise concerning the faith, and that's all.*" Now, what is *indifferent* and *concerns not the faith*, is no article of faith, neither express, nor understood, neither defined nor indefinite. Bellibéron says: "This proposition is not of faith;" and Bergier—"It is agreed that this is no dogma of the faith."

Theologians have favored it not as a known truth, but merely as a purely theological abstraction, possible, probable, permitted, or problematical, supported by some, reproated by others. Scotus himself says: "What is the fact about it, God only knows." Poitiers and Noel Alexandre say that it is a dispute among Catholics. Bellibéron, more modern, says it is the *more probable* opinion. Habert, that "it may be believed *without temerity*;" and Bossuet, who is worth fifty others, says positively, in his catechism, "all that is certain about this opinion is that it is *permitted*, and that it is a pious opinion."

The popes, in their bulls, have never designated it except as a *private opinion* of certain persons who believed it, while others denied it. They have never affirmed it to be a *verity*, nor called it such. They have been careful, in speaking of the *conception*, not to suffer themselves to use the prefix *immaculate*. They have never said it was their doctrine, nor the doctrine of the Holy See, nor that of the Church. But, on the contrary, they have expressly declared that this is not one of those things which *must be believed in the heart, and confessed with the mouth, in order to salvation*.<sup>(b)</sup> Also, that *the Eternal Wisdom has never yet revealed it to the Church*.<sup>(c)</sup> Now, as it is a principle that *the Church does not receive new revelations, since the*

(b) Pius V. *Super speculam.*

(c) Gregory XV. *Epist. ad reg. Hispan.*

*apostles' days*, (d) it is plain that what never has been revealed, never will be so. Consequently, it can never become an article of faith, seeing the Church defines nothing as an article of belief, except what has been held from the beginning. (e)

Those, then, who propose the immaculate conception as an article of faith, propose a *novelty*. They have against them, not only the ages which never heard of it, but even those which have accepted it, as a sentiment; that is to say, they have all past ages for their adversaries.

(d) It is a principle which the Church of Rome no longer recognizes, although it is essential to Catholic Faith.—Tr.

(e) The Abbé has yet to learn that the Council of Trent added many things to the faith, which were as fabulous as the dogma he condemns.—Tr.

## SUPPLEMENT;

OR FRAGMENTS OF THE FIRST EDITION, NOW REPLACED,  
WITH ADDITIONAL REMARKS.

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### I.

*A Protest against the idea of adding to the Christian Faith a new dogma, that of the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin. (a)*

It is well known, that His Holiness, Pius IX., issued this year (1849) a bull, in which he announces to all Christendom his intention of having the question of the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin looked into, to see if the differences that have heretofore existed on this subject can finally be settled by a definition. He invites all the bishops to make known to him what are the sentiments of their clergy and laity on this point. The Archbishop of Auch, after having, in his *Mandement* on this subject, called particular attention to his own very decided opinion, and to the manner in which he had expressed it on more than one occasion, gave the bull to his diocese,

(a) This, and the subjoined fragments were struck out of the second edition by M. Laborde, under the impression that they were the objectionable parts. But this edition being equally condemned, the author replaces them in the third, lest they should be misrepresented, and made the excuse for the severity of the censors.—

TR.

announcing at the same time, that "he proposed to answer the Holy Father, then and there, that the clergy and laity of his diocese united their most ardent prayers and desires to those of their bishop, humbly petitioning the holy Apostolic See for a formal dogmatic decision on the immaculate conception." The announcement of this by the Archbishop of Auch, occasioned the protest here laid before the reader. After some preliminary remarks, and some observations on the views which the Archbishop takes for granted, as being held by his clergy and laity, the author of the protest continues :

MY LORD,—However it may be with the rest, I at least pray your Highness to make an exception in my case. The sovereign pontiff is in earnest in wishing to know what are our prayers and desires ; and since our opinions are to influence the decision about to be taken, I should think myself wanting in a duty of conscience if I did not declare mine.

I inform you then, my Lord, that I, for my part, am not of opinion that the immaculate conception should be proclaimed. I am very far from desiring that those who refuse to believe it shall be condemned to be cut off from the Church, inasmuch as I am myself among the number, and am so upon principle. Here are my reasons :

These reasons are : (1,) the doctrine of Scripture ; (2,) that of the Holy Fathers ; (3,) the novelty of this opinion in the Church. They shall not be repeated here, having been already given in detail in the body of the work ; but it may be expedient here to publish the preliminary of the protest, which was withheld from the first edition. It runs thus :

MY LORD—Your Highness knows already which side I take in the controversy now agitating all minds, about the conception of the Blessed Virgin. The large volume that I have written on the subject, and which your Highness

has seen, must have shown you moreover that my opinions have not been hastily formed, but that I have, as in duty bound, taken time to study the matter, and have examined it carefully. Consequently, it seems not lawful for me to keep silent, when I consider what is going on. Your Highness will not, I hope, be offended. Where faith is involved, everything is involved, and it is then or never that we should speak clearly, and with perfect freedom.

When officially questioned, along with the rest of the bishops, by his Holiness the Pope, upon the desires of your clergy and people as to a dogmatic decision on the conception, it appears that your Highness determined, on the spot, (a) to answer for us all, the clergy as well as laity, of your diocese, that *we united our most ardent prayers and desires to those of our bishop*, to have it proclaimed as a matter of faith, and enforced under pain of damnation, that the conception of the Blessed Virgin was immaculate. My Lord, permit me here to express to you my surprise. *First*, as concerns your clergy, is your Highness quite sure of their opinion? If they had been called together *in synod*, if each had been *invited* first to reflect, and then *give his conscientious opinion, with perfect liberty*; if after a solemn discussion, in which all had given their free voice, the opinion which your Highness takes for granted, had been the unanimous result, after scrutiny, then I might understand your reply. But *nothing of the kind was done*; and, except, perhaps, the metropolitan chapter, *no one was consulted in any way*. Truth compels me to say, my Lord, that I know more than one priest who holds, in this matter, neither the same views, nor the same desires with yourself. And as regards the laity, it seems to me that they also should have been questioned, in order to know what their opinion may be; but, before all, they should have been qualified to give one, by a course of sound and perfectly impartial instructions. Whatever may be the state of their information, I think it is indulging a *consider-*

(b) It is well to note this fact, as showing how much importance is to be attached to the replies of the bishops, on this subject.—Tr.

*able illusion* to suppose that the majority of the laity of this diocese are ready to clamor for the imposition of new mysteries of faith upon their consciences! I, for my part, can certify that, even in my own small circle, I know some who do not believe in the immaculate conception, and who are greatly troubled at the thought that the belief in it is to be enforced; and these are among the best informed and the most pious.

It is for the interest of the subject itself that this fragment is here published. The facts which it shows give rise to very important observations.

It is very possible that what took place in other dioceses was but a repetition of what took place in the diocese of Auch; that is, the pope was in like manner answered that the *clergy and laity united their most ardent prayers and desires to those of their bishops*, to solicit the definition of the immaculate conception; whilst, in truth, neither clergy nor laity were invited to give their opinion, but, on the contrary, were discouraged, and *intimidations resorted to* to hinder them from so doing.

Now, suppose this to have taken place in many dioceses; (and, in fact, we have not heard of many synods being held, or of investigations being made in many places,) what follows? When the pope makes his definition, he will do so only on the ground of *those most ardent prayers and desires* of all the dioceses, of which we have just spoken; but those prayers and desires will only be a false supposition, by which the religion of the Holy Father will be deceived, such grounds *not existing in point of fact*! What sort of definition will it be then, that is based upon such a foundation? An empty definition, a surreptitious definition.

It is clear that these means, employed to bring about the declaration of the immaculate conception as a dogma of faith, accord neither with sincerity, nor with that simplicity



of the love commended to us by Jesus Christ and His apostles. Certainly, it is not the Holy Spirit whose guidance is superintending a measure which depends upon cunning, falsehood, and fraud for its success. Such was not indeed the conduct of the Church in past ages, when it undertook to define the faith. Those who had recourse to underhand proceedings, or falsehoods, or frauds, were always on the side of error; whilst, on the contrary, the defenders of the true faith did everything in broad daylight, and never swerved from the straight line of truth, candor, and uprightness.

When the matter in hand was a contested point of faith, the bishops assembled in council, general or provincial: there they examined, calmly and in the simple love of truth, the Scriptures and the traditions of the Church, to see what they contained relating to the point in question, and what they found there they declared to be of faith. As for what they could not find there, they defined that it was not possible to believe it. Thus had they learned to do, from the example of the apostles themselves.

But it is evident that, in this affair of the immaculate conception, they mean to go by another rule. Instead of having divine revelation, as contained in *Holy Scripture* and *the tradition of the Fathers*, for their starting point, they pretend to base a definition upon the opinion, the sentiments, the fancy of *living men*, whether bishops, priests, or laymen; and they do not consider that such measures can only avail to shake the old faith, and bring trouble on the Church, whilst the novelty, although appearing to triumph through such means, can never be a part of the faith.

## II.

*Levity of our age; and a refutation of the "Demonstration" of Monseigneur Parisis, late Bishop of Langres.*

It is probable that the fragment which follows may have helped to raise the storm that broke out against this work at its first publication. Certain it is, that it was then imputed to the author as a great crime. The first copy of the book had no sooner appeared in the archdiocese of Auch, than the author was ordered, 'without any formal proceeding, and without being allowed to offer any explanation, to write a letter of apology to Mgr. Parisis; and to do so within eight days, under the severe threat of interdict. This order tacitly implied the suppression of the book; but particular precautions were taken on that point, besides. The publisher, in Paris, received at the same time a letter, forbidding him to sell, or otherwise to distribute a single copy of the work; and giving him to understand that, in the event of his non-acquiescence, no book from his establishment should be allowed to come into the diocese for the future.(a) A bishop came afterwards, in person, to confirm this prohibition. The publisher was

(a) A French gentleman, a correspondent of the translator, once informed him that multitudes of the Gallican laity, and inferior clergy, longed for reforms, but were *terrified* by the threats of the bishops, who are too generally tools of State, or slaves of the Vatican, doing any thing for the sake of preferment.—Tr.

told, moreover, that the book contained enormities and blasphemies against the Blessed Virgin.

In spite of all this, we ourselves have never been able to discover anything in the passage relating to Mgr. Parisi, nor, indeed, in the whole volume, calculated to bring down such severity, or to justify measures so absolute and so unlike Christian gentleness.

Let the impartial and disinterested reader now decide. This is the passage :—

What reasonable man can believe, or what earnest-minded priest can religiously chant, what he does not know? What sincere preacher can instruct others in a matter of which he himself is not convinced by certain knowledge?

How, then, would the matter have been conducted if we, in this poor nineteenth century, had not been so light-minded, so in love with our own opinions, so curious after novelties, so vain and so eager to get up a reputation for great devotion to Mary, if, in a word, we had been more reasonable? It would have been said, "Well! shall we make it an article of faith that the Blessed Virgin was not tainted with original sin? Shall we chant it at public prayer? Shall we preach it? But let us first see if it is a *fact* that she was. Let us, before all, be sure that this is well known to be so." Now, they did nothing of the kind; but, on the contrary, without any examination, and just like those unsteady children of whom St. Paul speaks, they all began by striving who should be foremost to believe the mystery; or, to speak more correctly, to *say* they believed it, to preach it in the pulpit, and to chant it in the services, among the articles of faith. And it is not until afterward that they now take up the question whether what they believe, and preach, and chant, be true. They must at last come to the point from which they should have started, namely, the serious consideration of the question, and to the proof of what never should have been believed, or preached, or chanted without solid proof. What will happen then? When they set to work to prove,

what without proof should never have been received, (seeing too, that our fathers, who were better than we, did not receive it,) their reasons, upon calm examination, will dissolve like a cloud; and instead of proofs, sophisms, falsehoods, empty air will be all that remains to them.

We have a good example of this under our eyes. The last work on this subject, and the only one that has appeared amongst us deriving any weight from the character and position of the author, is the treatise of Mgr. the Bishop of Langres. Mgr. Parisis may be looked upon as one of the organs of the French clergy. His position gives him access to all necessary information, and enables him to lay hands on the strongest things that have been said in its favor. He knows, and has, doubtless, given all the reasons of those of his colleagues who are of his opinion. Moreover, Mgr. Parisis has given to his book the title of a *Demonstration* of the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin.

From this title, soberly given to his work, we had a right to expect that the Bishop of Langres was going to exhibit to our mind that the Blessed Virgin was conceived without sin, as clearly as we see that two and two make four, or that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. We had a right, I say, to expect it; but, alas! it is far otherwise. To tell the truth, in the whole treatise of Mgr. Parisis, the only sign of "demonstration" is on the title page.

First, he undertook to demonstrate the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin by reason. It is clear that he could not travel far on that road; so, at the outset, he is forced to confess that his reasons cannot count for proofs: but still, as he must fill his treatise with something, he holds on to them, and makes them figure under the name of *congruities*. Without entering into any discussion on this point with the prelate, I will simply remark, that it matters little to me if the generality of theologians during the last two centuries, and Mgr. Parisis among them, think it proper that the Blessed Virgin *should have been* conceived without sin. What I care to know is, not what men of the last two centuries may have thought proper, but

whether that which has seemed proper to them in the mystery of the Incarnation, (wherein God was pleased utterly to confound human wisdom,) has been shown by the revealed fact, to be what *God thought proper*, and whether He acted accordingly.

This is what Mgr. Parisis had to prove. It is no doubt with this intention, that he goes on to refer to the Holy Scriptures, in the course of his "demonstration;" but here again he is soon compelled to perceive that his reasons are not very *demonstrative*: so that he grants that they are not of a nature to satisfy *rigorous thinkers*. For whom, then, does the Bishop of Langres write, if his demonstrations do not appeal to exact minds? But he is quite right. His reasonings carry no conviction to a logical head, except perhaps the conviction that what he endeavors to sustain by the authority of the Holy Scriptures, has no foundation in the Holy Scriptures at all.

The demonstration of Mgr. Parisis is composed in all of eighty pages; but it is only at page thirty-six that the prelate enters into the subject, and treats formally of the reasons which he announces as theological demonstrations, *rigorous*, and *logically conclusive proofs*. It is here then, that he begins to *demonstrate* that the belief in the immaculate conception, on which superficial men have dared to fasten the reproach of novelty, (these are his words,) has on its side: (1st,) antiquity; (2d,) universality; (3d,) perpetuity. We will see with what skill he acquits himself of his task.

The first testimony that he adduces in favor of the antiquity, universality and perpetuity of the opinion which he upholds, is a passage from the acts of the martyrdom of St. Andrew. In the first place, Mgr. Parisis is compelled to acknowledge that his quotation is none of the most authentic; and then the passage does not refer at all to the *conception* of the Virgin, but only to her *virginity*. "*Necesse erat ut nasceretur ex virgine immaculata.*" He then gives two quotations from Greek Menologies—one under the name of a Saint Sabas, without saying which one, and the other under the name of a St. *Theophanus*, whom we could not trace farther back than the middle ages. The

passages which he gives celebrate the virginal fecundity, and the immaculate maternity of the Mother of God, but they do not contain one single word to prove that the authors of these prayers so much as thought of the conception of the Blessed Virgin, or of original sin. Such, however, in all its profundity and richness, is the list of authorities by which Mgr. Parisi *demonstrates*, 1st, the *antiquity* of the belief in the immaculate conception; 2d, its *UNIVERSALITY*; 3d, its *PERPETUITY*, during the *early ages*, which are eminently the ages to which we must look for tradition! No testimony of St. Gregory, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, Epiphanius, Lactantius, St. Cyprian, Tertullian, Origen, St. Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, St. Ignatius, St. Clement, nor of any other Father!

Arrived at length, at the Middle Ages, without having shown the idea of the immaculate conception in any monument of tradition, Mgr. Parisi exclaims, "After the tenth century we find devotion to the immaculate conception spread over all the earth." But not a *single proof* in support of so emphatic an assertion! Belief in the immaculate conception may actually be found, it is true, in the office of the Premonstratensians and Trinitarians, as he afterwards states; but the Premonstratensians were only founded at the beginning of the twelfth century, and the Trinitarians at the end of the same century. As to the sources from which these offices were taken, what then is their date? The Bishop of Langres does not say. The first important document bearing a date, that he quotes, is of the twelfth century. It is from the statutes of a chapter general of Carmelites, in France; but he does not produce the document itself, but quotes from *Ojeda*, (who is he?) and *Léxanta*, a mere fabulist, who is very capable of deceiving us. Mgr. Parisi then throws himself into the seventeenth century! There, at last, his sails find a stiff breeze, and he makes no difficulty in supplying us with *twenty entire pages* of quotations, to establish the fact that the belief in the immaculate conception existed at that period—which *nobody ever disputed*.

After all this, Mgr. Parisi congratulates himself upon

having fastened the claims of the immaculate conception upon the belief of the universe, not by mere inferences, but by a *direct, rigorous proof*; in a word, by *tradition itself*. The simple, unsophisticated souls for whom the prelate writes will believe him perhaps; but as for minds difficult and *rigorous* in the matter of *demonstration* (whom "he has no ambition to persuade,") they will draw no conclusion from his treatise, except that the belief in the immaculate conception is a *novelty*, of which the remotest vestige can not be found in the Church, before the twelfth century.

Here, then, is the passage on account of which we have been maltreated, pursued to Rome, and put into the Index. (*b*) It contains, however, (at least so it appears to us,) neither calumny, nor defamation, nor any offensive expression, that could possibly be considered as an insult.

The true reason why this passage gave dissatisfaction is, because it so effectually puts the finger on the weakness, the poverty, the nothingness of the pretended *demonstration* of Mgr. Parisi; because it reduces to its just value, a writing which servile and interested praises had puffed up to the skies, had given out as admirable, and even (to speak figuratively) divine, by the force of its *reasoning*: because it cleared away the illusive light thrown upon the immaculate conception in the name, and eminent reputation of the author, in the title of "demonstration" given to the book, and in the eulogies it had received; in fine, because it demonstrates the vanity and ignorance of a devotion which makes the principle of religion in individuals—indeed in the whole Church—and the hope of salvation, rest upon a popular opinion, in favor of which its most distinguished, best qualified, and most zealous advocates can find no serious proof, nor one good solid argument.

(*b*) A rich rejoinder! It is easier to put the Abbé into the Index, than to refute him.—Tr.

Human pride does not love to see the miserable degradation of our age exposed to the broad light of day ; and therefore it stigmatizes books that reveal it, as criminal. But surely, in the great crisis that we are now going through, it is not by the susceptibilities of human vanity that they who feel themselves called upon to defend the interests of the Church are to be counselled.(c)

(c) While M. Laborde is put into the Index, and persecuted for defending the faith of the Fathers, and of the Apostles, Monseigneur Parisis is already promoted from Langres to Arras, and is on the high road to an Archbishopric, and a Cardinal's hat. Such are the comparative rewards of fidelity to truth, and of servile submission to Rome, in the Papal communion.—Tr.



### III.

*Monseigneur Parisis shakes the foundations of Christian doctrine, while he props up his personal opinion.*

MGR. PARISIS asserts in his *Demonstration*, page 36, that "even the fundamental truths of religion were not perfectly defined from the beginning; that, laid down though they certainly were—but only in the germ—by the Son of God himself, in Holy Scripture, or in tradition, some only attained the precise state of articles of faith, as the truth came to be assailed by popular errors, and it was found necessary to give them a set form, in terms severely defined, so that they might withstand the adversaries of revealed truth."

What does the prelate mean by this equivocal language? Does he mean that these fundamental truths to which he alludes, are not expressed in Holy Scripture, distinctly, formally, and so as to be visible to every man of good faith; but that they are there only in an unformed state, invisible, still to be developed, as the fruit is in the tree, or as the chicken is in the egg? Does he mean that the apostles did not preach to all nations expressly, formally, distinctly, the divinity of the Word; the union, without confusion, of the two natures, divine and human, in Jesus Christ, in the unity of the person of the Son of God; the virginity of the Holy Virgin, joined to her maternity by the operation of the Holy Spirit; the reality of the flesh

of Jesus Christ; His two wills, and the other truths attacked by the heretics of the first centuries? Does he mean to say, that before the Councils of Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon, which defined these truths, Christians were no more obliged to believe them, than they are obliged, to-day, to believe the immaculate conception; that they might refuse to believe them, or even oppose them, without committing any greater sin than those who refuse to-day to admit the doctrine of the immaculate conception, and who oppose it? Does he mean that these fundamental truths were latent in primitive ages, or that they were only uncertain opinions, or, to adopt his manner of expressing himself, were only "pious opinions?"

If this is not what the Bishop of Langres does mean, I do not see how these equivocations can profit him, nor by what process of reasoning, he draws from them the conclusion which we find on the following page: that the absence of all trace of the immaculate conception, in the annals of the primitive Church, is *no reason* why we should not receive this doctrine as of faith! But if the prelate means what I have said, he does us the ill turn of delivering us over, bound hand and foot, to the Protestants. (a) Mgr. Parisis will no doubt think fit to explain himself clearly on so grave a point.

Meanwhile, I beg my readers to confront the language of this prelate with two questions of Leibnitz, and with the reply of Bossuet. Leibnitz asked Bossuet: (1st.)

(a) The Abbe sees, what the Court of Rome has blinked, in this practical blunder, that the adoption of the new dogma destroys folios of arguments against the novelties of Luther and Calvin; and that poor Bossuet's "Variations," &c., is henceforth killed for any one who can answer *tu quoque*.—Tr.

“Whether God only revealed articles of faith in former days, or whether He reveals them still?” (2d.) “Whether the revelations of former days are all contained in Holy Scripture, or are derived, at least, from apostolic tradition, which the more accommodating Protestants do not deny.”

What did Bossuet reply? He replied without hesitating, that “every article of faith ought to be a revealed truth of God. That God reveals *no new truths* belonging to the Catholic faith, and that the rule of *perpetuity* must be followed. That the Council of Trent acknowledges this rule, and declares that there are no other truths than those contained in Holy Scripture, or in the unwritten traditions which, received from the mouth of Christ by the apostles, or dictated to the same apostles by the Holy Spirit, have come down to us as from hand to hand. That we must hold it for certain that *no new revelation* is admitted; and that Œcumenical Councils, when they give a decision upon any truth, propose no new dogma, but only declare those which have always been believed, and explain them in clearer and more precise terms.” Bossuet says in another place, to the same Leibnitz, that “the true simplicity of the Christian doctrine consists principally, and essentially, in always using, in matters of faith, this certain note as a rule, viz: *yesterday such a thing was believed, therefore to-day it must be believed also.*”

This sentence of Bossuet, or rather this rule of faith which it lays down for Catholics, alone suffices to put an end to our dispute. We have only to put this question: What was believed *yesterday*, as to the immaculate conception? Yesterday it was believed that the immaculate conception was not a part of the faith; therefore, the same must be believed to-day. Yesterday it was believed that

the immaculate conception was only an opinion, a popular belief: therefore the same must be believed to-day. If we were to go back to St. Bernard's time, and place ourselves in that age, we might go much further, and say: the opinion of the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin is an entirely new idea; it has sprung up under our eyes, in the minds of a handful of ignorant men; but yesterday it was not believed that the Blessed Virgin, a child of Adam, was conceived without original sin, from which no child of Adam was ever free, except only Jesus Christ; therefore, the same must be believed to-day.

This rule holds good to-day; it will to-morrow, and every day, to the end of time. This rule holds good to-day; it was good yesterday, and every day, as far back as the apostles; consequently, what was not a dogma of faith in the times of the apostles, never will be.

When Mgr. Parisis, in his desire to bring the immaculate conception into his summary of faith, against the injunction of this rule, tries to show that the early Church did the same thing in her definitions, he deceives himself, and puts the Gospel itself in danger; he exposes the most fundamental mysteries of our religion to the peril of passing for human traditions, which only began to be dogmas of faith in the Church, from the day on which the Councils defined them.

It may here be noticed, that the Bishop of Arras, not being able, for all that he can do, to disguise the novelty of the belief which it is proposed to make a part of the faith against the rule, is led on to make himself, in express terms, the apologist of innovation in general, and here is what, in this view, he would persuade us:

According to him, it is very well to innovate, from time to time in the Church, and he gives as the reason, the

*requisitions of our fallen nature*, which grows weary and dull by the habitual monotonous practice of things perfectly similar! He pretends, for the same reason, that there will be in heaven, during all eternity, new revelations, perpetually; so that, to speak properly, the happiness of the saints will never be perfect and entire. God, to prevent His saints from *growing weary*, as on earth, or dull from the habitual monotony of seeing HIM always the same, will support their happiness by successive revelations of new perfections of His being, which at first He will have kept concealed from them! In fine, Mgr. Parisi informs us that since Christ's day, mankind has found itself (he does not say on what precise occasions,) in extraordinarily critical conditions, from which it has only emerged, each time, in virtue of the discovery, or the revelation of a new perfection in the Blessed Virgin, which perfection was until then unknown!

We may take occasion, one day, to examine this doctrine of *innovation* more at length, unless the bare mention of such singular assertions be not of itself a sufficient refutation of them.

## LETTER I.

*To the Cardinal President of the Congregation of the Index, with the second edition of the work.(a)*

MONSEIGNEUR :—I herewith present you my controversial writings on the conception of the Blessed Virgin, and on the passion of our Lord, now placed in your hands for the second time; but revised, augmented, corrected; in short, in such a form, that I believe they may promote the cause of truth, without giving room for any one to take exception to them, or to find fault with them.

I pray their eminences, the theologians of the Congregation, not to let my perseverance in handling these subjects astonish them, but rather let them learn from it how firm is my conviction that I write the truth. I say sin-

(a) In a "Short dissertation" prefixed to this letter, in the original work, the author has shown that the Gallican Church has never allowed the authority of the *Index*, with respect to France; and he further demonstrates the corrupt principles on which books are judged at Rome, their authors condemned and defamed, and their fidelity to Christ and His Church, rewarded with ignominy and contempt. Thus, while the moral theology of *Liguori* is endorsed, and its author canonized as a saint, the pure and heavenly minded moralist of Germany, the pious Hirscher, is put into the *Index*, and marked as one whom his Church disowns with contempt. Such is the crushing of souls and consciences, which characterizes the religion of the pope, contrasted with that liberty with which Christ makes his children "free indeed."—Tt.

cerely, that however attentively I regard them, I find nothing in my little works that their eminences, the cardinals can condemn, unless they desire to condemn the truth itself. My ignorance is great, I know; I am aware that I am fallible in a thousand points; but after all, having concentrated my attention, time after time, upon these subjects, in order that I might not fall into error in regard to them, it will be impossible for me to think that I have erred, unless it is made apparent to me, by clear and solid reasons. I earnestly supplicate of their eminences, therefore, that if they still find anything censurable, they will inform me of it, indicating the particular grounds of their judgment, and not to condemn me, if they condemn at all, without clearly setting forth the points condemned, along with the sentence itself. I shall be most happy, (and certainly it is but justice that I ask) if I must be condemned, *to have every one who sees me in that position, informed as to the extent and cause of my criminality*. If they do not see fit to expose the blemishes of my work, let them not pronounce it evil; for I prefer that all the world should know what may be reprehensible in my writings, according to the judgment of the very eminent theologians, rather than to be suspected indefinitely, of having written error, where, in fact, I am not wrong even in their estimation.

A second reason which has prevailed with me to republish the work, and thus to renew the controversy, is the danger which I apprehend from dogmas, fabulous and novel. I have dwelt sufficiently, in the work itself, on the evil consequences of *ables* intermingled with the truths of our *holy religion*, but I must enlarge somewhat, on the introduction of a new dogma.

First, and I am very glad, Monseigneur, that your eminence has observed it, I am utterly astonished to find my-

self, in these days, accused and condemned at Rome. Heretofore, the inviolable principle of the Roman See has been this canon of one of its pontiffs: (b) "No innovation—nothing but what has been handed down." Yet here am I, arraigned and made to suffer, at Rome—on what grounds? *Because I cling to antiquity, and absolutely refuse to acquiesce in a novelty.* (c) What then am I to conclude? Except that the maxim, *nihil innovetur* is no longer of any consideration at Rome.

Has it then been handed down, from the beginning, that the immaculate conception is a dogma of the Catholic faith? If it has been, let it be shown, and it will be forever inviolable. If not—*nihil innovetur!* "Nothing but what has been handed down." Has the doctrine heretofore been received as of faith, unto salvation? As revealed and necessary? If the Catholic world has thus believed, from the beginning until now, let us be of the same mind forever; if not—*nihil innovetur!* "No innovation; nothing but what has been handed down." Perhaps, heretofore, our predecessors in the faith, have not been able to lay hold on external life, as true Christians, without believing in the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin; then let it be defined, and let gainsayers be excommunicated. But is this the case? Heretofore, on the contrary, souls have been saved, in all the world, and have been truly Christian, without any such faith. So then—" *nihil innovetur*, nothing but what has been

(b) *Nihil innovetur; nisi quid traditum est. Epistle of Stephen to Cyprian.* The sincerely honest Abbé, will find by further examination, that the popes took leave of this principle many centuries ago.—Tr.

(c) The entire Church of England was excommunicated long since, on precisely the same grounds. But such an excommunication affects the Apostles as much as it does us.—Tr.



handed down." Why then does Rome itself excite these disturbances, and vex and worry true Catholics? Am not I such? Am I not a Catholic this day? I who have lived nearly fifty years, ever since I was born, in the communion of the Church, without any belief in the immaculate conception? How is it, then, that I shall not die a Catholic, provided I profess to-morrow, the same faith into which I was baptized at the holy font, and in which I have lived, a good Catholic, to this day.(d)

What then? Are we to understand that true wisdom and piety were never in existence before the *nineteenth* century? Why has this dogma not been defined ages ago? I wish some one would give me an answer to this question, which would not operate against his own cause. Till such an answer is given, I must give answer to myself—that *the only reason why past ages never made any such dogma, is that no new dogma could be made.* If it had been a possibility, Alexander VII. would have decreed it, or Gregory XV., or Paul V., or Sixtus IV., or Leo X.! The Council of Lateran would have defined it, or the Council of Constance, or the Council of Florence, or at any rate, the Council of Trent.(e) All these abstained from defining

(d) There is absolutely no resisting the truth of this eloquent appeal; and the consequence is that the pope, in anathematizing those who reject his profane novelty, is only launching a dart which rebounds and strikes his own pate. 'Tis the old sin of Diotrephes. St. John. Ep. iii. 9.—Tr.

(e) To all this, a true answer would be, that these Councils had their hands full of other novelties, which were then ripe for being made into dogmas, and they left the immaculate conception to take its course. The Abbé deceives himself in supposing that these Councils acted on the principle of respecting antiquity. Pius IX. only carries out their ideas, save only in acting without a pseudo-council to sustain him.—Tr.

it, because they saw and knew that it could not be made a dogma. And why not? Simply because they knew it could not be proved, whether by Scripture, or by tradition from the primitive ages, and the holy fathers, as revealed to them, and by them transmitted. Can it be proved any better, at this time?(f)

Finally, what need of words? Let the pontiff's decree appear to-morrow, if he will have it so: let him pronounce with all his power, that the Blessed Virgin is immaculately conceived. What then? *Will it be any the less a historical fact* that St. Thomas believed and taught the contrary? That St. Bernard, the devotee, *par excellence*, of the Blessed Virgin, rejected it with disdain, and branded it as a novelty: that it is an opinion of which nothing was known to St. Anselm, nothing to St. Gregory, nor yet to St. Leo, nor to St. Fulgentius, nor to St. Jerome, nor to St. Chrysostom, nor to St. Gregory Nazianzen, nor to St. Augustine, nor to St. Ambrose, nor to Origen? What is more to the purpose, will it be less true that all these teach opposite doctrines, and doctrines inconsistent with the new dogma? Will it be less true, less historical, for all the pontifical decrees, that during the whole of the twelfth century, the Faculty of Paris, held and taught the direct contrary; as did the founders of the School Divinity, Alexander de Hales, Albertus Magnus, St. Bonaventure, and all the other theological faculties, which only gave in to the opinion at a much later day, and even then assented

(f) The Abbé is addressing music to a deaf adder. The court of Rome feels no such arguments as this, conclusive as they are to a true Catholic, on Catholic principles. Rome has only to answer, "If we have made *transubstantiation* a dogma, why not this? They are alike unknown to the fathers." In fact, the Abbé's arguments destroy the whole system which he imagines to be Catholic.—Tx.

to it, not in any wise as a revealed truth of God, but only as a theological opinion?(g)

I am required, then, to believe at the same time, these two things; (1,) that the immaculate conception is a dogma of the Catholic faith, and of *all ages*—since what is not of all ages cannot be Catholic—and (2,) that the belief in this dogma is, nevertheless, entirely modern. I must believe that the immaculate conception is of the Catholic faith by definition, while I must still hold that it is a novel idea, by historical evidence. And so, I must teach, at the same moment, and with equal truth, (1,) that the sovereign pontiff has defined by a dogmatic decree, that it is a Catholic dogma, received as such by the Church, and always believed everywhere, and by all, in her communion; such being the essential notes of what is Catholic: and (2,) that, nevertheless, it is incontestable, by the evidence of historical facts, that this doctrine was unknown to the Church, during the first eleven centuries; that it was never heard of among the holy fathers; and that, on the contrary, all of them who have had occasion to touch upon the subject, have asserted that the Blessed Virgin was not exempt from the taint of original sin; that with greater or less fullness, this was maintained by St. Fulgentius, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory Nazianzen; that, at least, by implication, St. Ambrose, St. Leo, St. Gregory, St. Chrysostom, St. Jerome, and Origen, teach the same; and that

(g) The Abbé Laborde forgets what he has shown in his own introduction, that there is nothing which cannot be managed by a disciple of *Liguori*. He is dealing with men, whom he has himself shown to be capable of falsehood and perjury on *religious* principle. Accordingly, it is an easy thing to *manufacture* quotations from the fathers, or to use such as are known to be spurious.  
—Tr.

in express terms, and with direct purpose to refute the immaculate conception, the same was done by St. Bernard, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, the Master of the Sentences, and the whole Faculty of Paris, down to the thirteenth century.

Such a contradiction existing, can the human mind hinder itself from seeing, by the clear and strong light of reason, that the supposed decree of the sovereign pontiff, pronounces what is false, and rests on a mistake as to facts? (h) Is it not one of the principle articles of our faith, that the entire faith has for its authors the apostles of Jesus Christ, and that nothing is Catholic which is posterior to the apostles in its origin? If so, it is of faith that that *cannot be of faith*, which is shown by ecclesiastical history to be a novelty, and never to have been received in the age of the fathers. Let this suffice in opposition to the introduction of any new dogma, and in defence of my work.

May the Blessed Virgin herself, who brought forth truth upon earth, and who now lives by the truth, in heaven, grant that all may come to the conclusion that she cannot be honored except by verity! May she, by the aid of her prayers, obtain for us that, prevented and assisted by the

(A) When Galileo renounced his own convictions as to physical truth, through fear of the inquisition, were his writings and demonstrations, one particle less valuable and convincing? Let it be remembered what Hirscher and Laborde have demonstrated as facts, and shown to be their honest convictions; and if Rome should succeed in silencing both of them, it will only prove that her tyranny over conscience is crushing, and that her apparent doctrinal unity is the product of stifled convictions, and of suppressed contempt for what is only submitted to in a sort of desperation, to avoid penalties which might well shake the nerves of stouter men, than are the best specimens of a priesthood who have been all their lives enslaved.—TR.

grace of God, through the merit of Jesus Christ, we may all love and seek nothing but verity, to the end that having found it, there may be no more schisms and disputes, but that we may all be one in Him, who is the Truth in its Unity!

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## LETTER II.

*To Monseigneur de la Croix, Archbishop of Auch.*

In the dissensions which the enemy sows in the bosom of the Church, there are ordinarily but few laymen, and occasionally but few priests who are able to discover, from the bare ground of the controversy, what is truth and what error; there is however an accidental consideration that may make it easy for all to judge: that is, the consideration of the discussion of the subject as it goes on.

Everybody feels that truth neither fears examination, nor discussion, nor open explanation. Hence it follows that the best test of truth and falsehood is a fair discussion in public conference. This is the method above all others, the method, too, which has always been practiced in the Church, that pillar of the truth.

Jesus Christ himself first showed and proved the truth of His mission in His public disputes with the Pharisees: the Gospel of St. John is consecrated to preserving the memorial of them for us. The apostles, in their turn, carried on the first controversy that arose in the Church, in a public conference at the Council of Jerusalem. The different councils held afterwards, in the course of ages were nothing but public conferences, to which the Church had recourse, whenever disputes arising, rendered it necessary to confound error and establish the truth.

Thus on the different occasions which have presented themselves, it has never been the Catholics who have held back from the light, and from being put to the proof of public conferences; as often as the heretics have accepted them, or accepted them as not being able to avoid them, they have had the worst of it; often have they been known to abjure their errors, at least orally; and sometimes they have been really converted to the truth.

Truth loves, then, the light of day; error seeks darkness. Jesus Christ pointed out to us Himself this method for discerning truth. He who has but false ideas and false reasons to back them, dreads the risk of exposing them to contradiction, and having to defend them: whoever, on the other hand, has truth and good reasons on his side, asks nothing better than to be allowed to produce them.

Thus much being said, to bring the judgment of our cause and our controversy to within the reach of a child, nothing remains but to look and see who seeks exposure, and who avoids it; who asks for the daylight of discussion, and who wishes to make a definition of faith without discussion, and in the dark; who proposes the proof of a public conference, and who refuses. Let it now be decided who has the right on his side, and who the wrong; and whose is the timid conscience that betrays it.

The following letter will enable the public to determine:

MY LORD:—Immediately after your return from Rome, on the 12th of January last, I wrote to ask an audience of your highness. My request was not granted, and I was answered by the Abbé Dupin, your vicar-general, that you had nothing to examine, or to discuss, with me. Must I conclude from this, Monseigneur, that I have no justice to expect from my archbishop in this affair? I cannot admit such a conclusion; but be it as it may, I think it important to transmit to your grace, an exact copy of a letter which

I recently addressed to the Cardinals of the Congregation of the Index. This letter contains in substance, a complete summary of the book, the subject of our present difficulties. It is written in good faith, with full conviction, the fruit of exact study, and with a personal assurance that I am right. I transmit it to your grace, praying you, if you judge otherwise of it, to condescend to inform me. I desire only that this may be done courteously, with moderation, and on principle, according to the counsel of the apostle: "If any man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one, in the spirit of kindness," and not by threats and censure, nor by repeating to me what I have so often heard already, that I am "contumacious, a Protestant, a Jansenist, an enthusiast;" because such treatment, instead of convincing me that I am mistaken, would produce, as it always must, an entirely opposite effect. If I am ignorant, I only seek to be instructed; if I err, I only ask to be undeceived. Your grace, is by the ordinance of God, my shepherd, my teacher, and my master. If then, when I think I hold the truth, you judge that I am in error, I have an undeniable right to receive from you enlightenment, explanation, and instruction.

This has always been the practice of the Church; of which we have a remarkable example in St. Denys, patriarch of Alexandria, who once found in his vast province, a country where the priests had fallen into an error, which he considered serious. What did he do? He began by calling them all around him: he then proposed to them, that all should examine the subject together, on condition that whichever of them, be it he or they, should be convinced of errors, the party so convinced should own it in good faith. To this they consented, and the successor of the apostles seated himself in the midst of the priests, his brethren and fellow laborers. The question was calmly examined. They suggested, discussed, replied with equal liberty, and pure love of true doctrine; and after a conference of two or three days, the priests being convinced that they were in the wrong, yielded, and all was finished. Why, Monseigneur, should your grace not repeat such an

experiment? We see also, SS. Augustine, Ambrose—François de Sales, Bossuet, thus employing the means of persuasion in their conferences, even with heretical ministers, strangers to the fold of the Church, and your grace would refuse a similar courtesy to a priest of your own diocese, who professes in his doctrine, entire good faith and sincerity.

Error can never be sustained by sound reason: consequently, Monseigneur, it is error only that has reason to shun conference, to obscure the light, and to fear that what it can advance will be confounded by the lustre of opposing truth. Your grace, may, or may not persevere then, in refusing me an interview; but I hope, at least, that no one will consider unreasonable, the request which I make that one should be granted me.

I am, Monseigneur,

with the most profound respect,

February 2, 1852.

The ABBÉ LABORDE.

P. S.—*To the reader.*—The interview was not allowed me.

## LETTER

*To his Holiness, Pope Pius IX.*

**MOST HOLY FATHER:**—Our Lord Jesus Christ, when about to leave the earth, gave order to His apostles to go and teach all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them. (a) To enable them to acquit themselves perfectly and invincibly in this mission, He added the promise of the Holy Ghost; that the Spirit of truth should dwell in them, guiding them into all truth, teaching them all things, and bringing to their remembrance whatsoever he had said to them. (b)

(a) St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

(b) St John xvi. 13; and xiv. 26.



Jesus Christ kept his promise; and, after that the blessed apostles had been filled with the Holy Ghost, they preached everywhere on the house-tops what they had heard in the ear; "the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following." (c)

"We have then, for the authors of our faith," says Tertullian, (d) "the apostles of the Lord, who chose nothing, of their own will, that they might introduce it, but have transmitted faithfully to the nations what they themselves received from Christ." Now, this sum of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which has been handed down by the apostles to every Church, as it was founded, to be by them guarded and successively transmitted from hand to hand until the last day of the world—this is the Catholic faith; this is that *depositum* of our faith of which the apostle said, speaking to Timothy: (e) "Oh, Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing, have erred concerning the faith."

Moreover, this deposit of the faith has been transmitted by the apostles of Jesus Christ to all Timothies; that is, to all Christians who fear God, to be by them kept in such wise that they never should add anything to it, nor take anything from it, nor change anything in it, nor interweave with it anything foreign to it: and that they never should suffer any one to add to it, or suppress, or change, anything in it, or mingle with it anything alien. And they have commanded us, if any one should undertake to teach aught other than that which they have transmitted from the beginning, to call him *anathema*: "Though we, or an angel

(c) Acts ii. 4; Matt. x. 27; and Mark xvi. 20.

(d) Tertul. de Præscrip. c. vi.

(e) 1 Tim. vi. 21.

from heaven, preach any Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”(f) For this reason it is that a great man (or rather, all the fathers of the Church, successors of the apostles, speaking by the mouth of one of their number) has given us this law: “To preach anything, then, to Catholic Christians, other than that which they have already received, is a thing which *is not lawful*, which *never was lawful*, and *which never will be lawful*; and to anathematize those who preach anything beside what has once been received, never has been otherwise than a duty, is never less than duty, and *never will be less than duty*.” After this he adds: “Can there be any one of so much audacity as to wish to set forth anything other than that which has already been set forth by the Church, or of so much imprudence as to receive anything other than that which he has already received from the Churches? The apostle St. Paul, that chosen vessel, that doctor of the nations, that trumpet of the apostles, that herald of all the world, in a word, he who witnessed the mysteries of heaven, cries aloud and repeats, addressing himself to all the faithful, in all times and all places: if any one preach a new doctrine, let him be *anathema*.”(g)

Such being the case, most holy father, who will not be astonished to see that a new dogma is announced to Catholic Christians; that a new dogma is at this moment in forging at Rome? For is it not everywhere spoken of

(f) Galat. i. 8, 9.

(g) Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitory*, ix. chap. See p. 24, Jos. Robinson's edition, Baltimore, 1847.—Tr.

that your holiness threatens the universe with a decree which is to command us to believe that the conception of the Blessed Virgin was immaculate? But, holy father, this is precisely what the apostle called "profane and vain babbling, and opposition of science falsely so called:" this is precisely preaching a Gospel different from that preached unto us by that Master of the nations, that trumpet of apostles, that herald of all the earth, that eye-witness of the mysteries of heaven.

In fact, an apostle, thus familiar with the inner heavens, has given us no intimation that the Blessed Virgin was exempt from original sin. He excepts absolutely, not one, so that he includes the Blessed Virgin with all mankind, when he says: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly; for scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die."(*h*) Therefore, seeing Christ died for her, the Blessed Virgin was not righteous, she was not without taint.

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and death passed upon all men, for that *all have sinned*."(*i*) *All* have sinned—including therefore the Blessed Virgin. "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again."(*j*) We shall presently see the application of this passage from St. Augustine.

The ancient fathers of the Church, successors in office of the apostles, legitimate interpreters of the Scriptures, and

(*h*) Rom. v. 6.

(*i*) Rom. v. 12.

(*j*) 2 Cor. v. 14.

themselves, in their day, witnesses, guardians and oracles of the tradition and faith of the Church, have taught us that our Lord Jesus Christ *alone* was without original sin, because He alone was conceived without the seed of man, and without the embrace of man and woman; but that Mary, His blessed mother, was sinful flesh; that is, conceived in sin like all mankind; because, like all mankind, she was born of the embrace of man and woman. Thus Origen(*k*)—"None other, then, has ever been able to escape these nets (of concupiscence and sin), for *all have sinned*, as it is written: '*By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.*' And again: '*No one is pure from sin, even if his life upon the earth were only for one day.*'(*l*) Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the only one that never sinned; but the Father made Him sin for us, that being in the likeness of sinful flesh and *derived of sin*, He might condemn sin. He then came into the nets, but he is the only one who could not be held in them." So, too, St. Augustine:(*m*) "He alone was born without sin, who was conceived without the embrace of man, not in the concupiscence of the flesh, but in the subjection of the spirit, by a Virgin. She alone was able to prepare the remedy for our wound who produced a holy offspring without the wound of sin." These, then, are the respective privileges of the son and of the mother: the son alone was conceived without sin; the mother was the only mother that ever conceived such a seed. But again, the same father:(*n*) "*He alone*, who became man without

(*k*) Cantic. Hom. iii. *in fine*.

(*l*) Such is the Septuagint version of Job xiv. 4, 5.—TR.

(*m*) De pecc. merit. Lib I. cap. xix. n. 57.

(*n*) De pecc. merit. Lib. II. cap. xxiv. n. 38.

ceasing to be God, did never sin, nor take upon him *flesh of sin*, although born of a mother *who was sinful flesh*.” And again he says:(o) “All therefore are dead, and Christ *died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them and rose again*: so that *without one single exception*, all are dead in sins, whether original or superadded in will, or in ignorance, or in knowledge of what is right without obedience; and the *only living one*, that is, the *only one absolutely sinless*, died for *all the rest, who were all dead*, that they who are made alive by the remission of their sins, may live no longer to themselves, but unto Him who died for all, that is for our sins, and rose again for our justification.” On this subject all the other fathers have spoken as with one voice.(p)

Such is then, Holy Father, the doctrine which we have received from the beginning. As yet, eighteen hundred and fifty-four years after the preaching of the apostles, it is not, to this day, an article of faith that the Blessed Virgin was created free from sin, so, that if, to-morrow it should become a dogma of the faith, it will be *a new dogma*. With this letter, we send your Holiness a volume entitled, “The belief in the Immaculate Conception cannot become *an article of Faith*,” in which is shown, more at length, what is here stated in few words. The precise time is therein established in which it was still unheard of in the Church, that the Blessed Virgin was created free from

(o) De civitat. Dei. Lib. xx. cap. vi. n. 1.

(p) And let it be remembered that according to the creed of Pius the fourth, every member of the Roman Catholic communion professes as follows: “Neither will I ever take and interpret them (*sc.* the Scriptures) otherwise than according to *the unanimous consent of the fathers*.”—TR.

the stain of original sin; the doctor is also named who first publicly professed this opinion; and it is proved historically, from the very steps by which this opinion advanced, that it is a new invention in the Church. We pray you, Holy Father, seriously to consider the weight of these arguments: for your Holiness ought not to be ignorant of the unhappy consequences, which must necessarily follow an attempt to make the Christian world accept a new dogma. In the words of Tertullian :*(g)* "We have nothing to do with curiosity, having found Jesus Christ; nor with discoveries, having received the Gospel. When we believe, we desire to believe nothing further: for the very first thing we believe is, that *there is nothing that we ought to believe beyond what we believe already.*" We cannot get over obeying the apostles' precepts. It is not lawful for us *not* to oppose new dogmas of faith.

We believe, and confess most willingly, Holy Father, that the Bishop of the first See has the primacy in the Church.*(r)* We are ready to preach and maintain, with all our might, that Peter, to whom the flock was confided by Christ, was the first in the company of the apostles; that he had first authority in the business of religion, as being the one to whom the care of all had been given.*(s)* We call the Bishop of Rome the legitimate successor of St. Peter, and we believe the authority of the former to be no less valid than that of the latter; but we are not allowed to forget that occasion may come, from time to time, when it is necessary for Paul to withstand Peter to the face, if it should happen that Peter is "to be blamed," and that Paul

*(g)* De præser. cap. viii.

*(r)* Canon xxv. Council of Carthage.

*(s)* S. Chrysost. Hom iii. (in cap. i. Ach.) n. 1, 3.

sees that ~~he~~ walketh "not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel." (t) You, Holy Father, are Peter, and we, the body of Christians, are Paul. If then, you imitate Peter in walking not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel, it belongs to us to imitate Paul, and withstand you to the face. And what can be more positively "walking not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel," than attempting to make new dogmas? We adopt the language of St. Jerome to Damasus : (u) "We certainly, at the same time, that we follow no other principal Head than Jesus Christ, are united in communion with your Holiness, that is, with the See of Peter. We know that the Church is built upon that Rock, and we believe him who eateth with the Lamb outside of this house, to be a profane person." But this does not make us forget that fortitude of soul with which our holy Hilary of Poitiers said to a certain sacrilegious bishop of the Roman Church: "Know, Liberius, that I call thee anathema, thee and thy companions. I say to thee anathema, for the second and the third time, *thou prevaricator, Liberius!*"

And here, Holy Father, is the authentic decree of the sixth General Council, (v) against a bishop of the primal see, in times past: "Together with those, we have thought right to *cut off from the holy Catholic Church of God*, and also to *anathematize* Honorius, formerly Pope of old Rome, (w) because we find in writings of his, addressed to

(t) Galat. ii. 11-14.

(u) Damasus was Bishop of Rome A. D. 382.—Tr.

(v) Constantinople, A. D. 680.—Tr.

(w) The Pope of New Rome was the Bishop of Constantinople, this term Papa being common to all bishops. But Honorius (A. D. 638) lived subsequently to the claim of the "Universal Bishopric," and may be regarded as a pope in the modern sense of the word.—Tr.

Sergius, that he followed him in all his opinions, and that he *confirmed his impious dogmas.*"(x) Moreover, Holy Father, we have the authentic acts of the seventh General Council, (y) against the same : "We profess also our belief in two wills and operations, according to the perfection of the two natures in JESUS CHRIST, as it was decided, by acclamation, in the sixth Council at Constantinople, when it *cut off* Sergius, HONORIUS, Cyrus, Pyrrhus, Macarius, and those enemies of religion who think with them."(z) Again, Holy Father, we have the genuine letter of another Bishop of the first See, who also pronounces anathema to that unworthy Bishop of the Roman Church, and confirms the anathema of the sixth General Council. I quote the letter of Leo II : "In like manner we *anathematize* the inventors of the new error ; that is to say, Theodore, Bishop of Pharan ; Cyrus, Bishop of Alexandria ; Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul, Peter, successors rather than bishops of the Church of Constantinople ; and likewise Honorius, who, instead of adorning this Apostolic Church with the doctrine of apostolic tradition, endeavored to overthrow the undefiled faith by a profane betrayal."(a)

We cannot, in duty, shut our eyes to all these things, nor to many other similar facts, from the times of the apostles down to our own days, which it would be tedious to enumerate. Woe to those faithless pastors who, instead of strengthening their brethren in the faith, as they ought to do, (b) have endeavored to overthrow the faith itself ! Woe to those pastors, ravening wolves in sheep's clothing, who,

(x) Labbe. Tom. vi. p. 297.

(y) This Council, held at Nicæa A. D. 787, is counted General by the Latin Churches, but not by us.—Tr.

(z) Labbe. Tom. vii. p. 555.

(a) Epistle of Leo II. See L'Abbe, Council vi. *ad calcem*.

(b) Luke xxii. 32.



after having received from Jesus Christ this sacred command—"Feed my lambs, feed my sheep," have torn, with their teeth and their nails, both the sheep and the lambs!

May God keep you, beloved Father, from going in their ways! May the Lord enlighten the eyes of your understanding,<sup>(c)</sup> that you may see the wiles of the serpent, prepared against your soul, and against the peace of the Church, by the mouth of flatterers. We know it, we know it; deceitful flattery still entices you, unceasingly. It says that you will make your name glorious before men, and assure to the Bishops of Rome the dominion of all the Church, if, by a decree of faith, binding upon all Christians, laity, clergy, priests, bishops, you define a question which none of your predecessors, nor any Council has dared to define to that effect. These are the snares of the serpent; for if your Holiness should be so unfortunate as to enjoin belief in the new dogma which they contemplate, you will gain for yourself, not glory, but ignominy, and for the Bishop of Rome not dominion, but derision. In fact, what will all this be but a fresh proof, added to so many historic proofs, that the Bishop of Rome is, like the rest of mankind, a weak mortal, prone to sin, subject to error, who may happen to become a prevaricator with his sacred trust, himself deceived, and desiring to deceive others.

Hear us, rather, beloved Father; listen to us who seek true glory for your Holiness, not by adulation, but by the love of truth, of charity, and of peace.

May God long preserve your life, and keep you holy, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Most Holy Father, for myself, and in the name of many others, priests and faithful laity of both sexes, who are of one mind with me, I am,

L'ABBE LABORDE,

August 13, 1854.

de Lectoure.

(c) Ephes. i. 17, 18.

## NOTES.

### I.

The Translator finds the following statement in a letter of the Paris correspondent of the London Daily News :

"A French clergyman, the Abbé Laborde, has published a pamphlet, which makes a great noise in the religious world, entitled 'A Memorandum of the Opponents of the new dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and of the Bull *Ineffabilis*.' The author, immediately on his arrival at Rome, in November last, presented a petition to the pope against what he terms the 'profane novelties' intended to be enforced upon the Church. The only answer made by his Holiness was a summons to attend the *Segretaria*, and there, in a dark chamber, he received from a monk the order to leave Rome immediately. He did not obey. Shortly afterwards the 'Lieutenant of Police of Conscience' made an incursion into his lodgings, and seized the copies of his petition, and also a pamphlet, entitled 'The Immaculate Conception not a Dogma of Faith.' A few days later the Lieutenant of Police renewed the order that he should leave the country. M. Laborde replied that he would not attempt to resist physical force, that he had come to Rome to do his utmost to avert what appeared to him a great calamity for the Church, and he protested against the violence with which he was menaced. Ultimately, and after being compelled to appear before the Inquisition, he was conducted by gendarmes to Civita Vecchia, and there put on board a vessel bound for France. The Abbé gives a flat contradiction to the story promulgated by the *Univers*, that Rome 'was drunk with joy'

when the new dogma was proclaimed. He saw nothing like enthusiasm anywhere. He concludes that the pope's decree is void, because, according to the laws of the Catholic Church, the dogma ought not to have been promulgated without the authority of a General Council, in which all bishops might have been freely heard without being exposed to persecution."

It is said, in a subsequent letter, that the Abbé took precautions for his personal safety, by an understanding with the French ambassador.

## II.

The passage from St. Anselm, with which our author starts,<sup>(a)</sup> appears to me so much stronger, in the original, than M. Laborde has made it, as taken at second-hand from Fleury, that I am unwilling to deny myself the privilege of giving the extract in the words of the original itself. Not only will the learned reader be thus enabled to see the utter absurdity of the supposition that St. Anselm could have known any such doctrine as that of the immaculate conception, but, also, he will see as plainly, from the context, which I supply, that he must have regarded the Blessed Virgin as justified by *faith*, and so, by faith only cleansed from *sins*, as well as from *sin*; that is, from actual transgression, as well as from a corrupt nature. The monk thus states his difficulty, to begin with:—

"Q. Licet ipsa hominis ejusdem conceptio sit munda, et absque carnalis delectationis peccato, Virgo tamen ipsa, unde assumptus est, est in *iniquitatibus concepta, et in peccatis concepit eam mater ejus, et cum originali peccato nata est*, quoniam et ipsa in Adam peccavit, in quo omnes peccaverunt."

(a) See page 36, *ante*.

"A. Postquam constat hominem illum esse Deum, et peccatorum reconciliatorem, dubium non est eum omnino sine peccato esse; hoc autem esse non valet nisi absque peccato *de massa peccatrice* sit assumptus." *Cur Deus Homo*, cap. xvi.

Again, Anselm replies to the monk :

"A. Virgo autem illa, de qua ille homo assumptus est de quo loquimur, fuit de illis, qui ante nativitatem ejus, *per eum mundati eunt a peccatis*, et in ejus ipsa munditia de illa assumptus est."

"B. Placeret mihi multum quod dicis, nisi cum ipse debeat a seipso habere munditiam a peccato, videtur eam habere a matre, et non per se mundus esse, sed per illam."

"A. Non ita est." Cap. xvi. p. 92.

Again, speaking of the apparent *necessity* laid upon Christ to suffer death, the monk urges :

"B. Nam si moriturus non esset, Virgo de qua assumptus est *munda non fuisset, quoniam hoc nequaquam valuit esse nisi* veram ejus mortem *credendo*."

Now, had Anselm known anything of an immaculate conception, how impossible that he should not here have broached it! The monk pronounces it impossible that she should have been cleansed from sin, except by *believing the verity* of His death, hence arguing that He was subject to the necessity of dying; and to this Anselm only answers that it was a voluntary death, and not a necessary one, confirming, however, the assertion that she was cleansed from sin *by faith* in that death, as follows :

"A. Denique, Virgo, quæ, *per fidem munda facta est*, ut de illa posset assumi, nequequam credidit illum esse moriturum, nisi qui vellet; quemadmodum per prophetam (Isa. liii. 7) qui de illo dixit *oblatus est quia ipse voluit*, didicerat." *Ib.* cap. xviii. 94. Paris, 1675.

Now, the pope defines "that in the moment of her conception she was exempted from taint of sin;" but here St. Anselm speaks of her as not exempted, but *washed*, not from sin, but from *sins*; not in the moment of her conception, but in *maturity* of mental power, if not of physical growth; and this, not by any special privilege, but *by faith* in the blood of her Son, that was to be.

It may be well to mention, here, that while St. Augustine teaches this same doctrine, over and over again, in terms the most direct, and not to be mistaken, he is continually represented as a believer in the *immaculate conception*, on the strength of a single expression, of no real bearing on the point, and which is wrested most violently from its actual signification. Thus, speaking of St. Mary as a sinner in many other places, he on one occasion forbears to do so, out of reverence, not to her, but to her Son; implying, that though she was a sinner, he will not make her his example, or illustrate his doctrine by dwelling on the imperfection of the Mother of our Lord. This, in the crafty hand of Bishop Ullathorne, becomes a very different thing. He ignores the many passages in which the Saint observes no such rule, but coolly represents it as a general canon of Augustine, enjoining too great a veneration for her, to suppose her even *conceived in sin*—a subject on which the Saint does not touch; the only point being her *actual transgression*. Here are the very words of this ingenious misrepresentation: "St. Augustine replied (to Pelagius) that all the just had truly known sin, except (he says) the holy Virgin Mary, of whom, for the honor of the Lord, I will have no question whatever when *sin* is concerned." It would have been more honest, had Bishop Ullathorne phrased it thus: "that all, even the just, had been *actual transgressors*, leaving the Blessed Virgin out

of the case, of whom, for the honor of the Lord, I will not speak in treating of sin," *i. e.* lest by enlarging upon Mary's sin, I should seem to forget the reverence due to her Son, for whose sake I forbear. Here, had the Church believed her sinless, St. Augustine would have said, rather, "of whom it is needless to say that, as all know, she was by special privilege free from even original sin." Passage after passage, which the Mariolaters wrest to their guilty purposes, might be similarly exposed, as specimens of this cunning jugglery with the Fathers, but let this answer, for the present; and may it please God to give the forgers and corrupters of such authorities a speedy repentance, and better minds.—Tr.

## LETTER

FROM THE TRANSLATOR, TO A ROMAN CATHOLIC GENTLE-  
MAN IN FRANCE.

MY DEAR SIR,—I thank you, sincerely, for the books you were so kind as to send me, and beg to acknowledge your favor of —, received at the same time.

As to Mr. Newman's treatment on *Development*, it is full of the ingenuity and interest with which that eccentric individual has imbued all his writings, but is a very inferior work in all respects, but especially in candor and fairness, to several unanswerable writings which he produced, before his lapse, and upon the other side of the question.

The Holy Scriptures are so clear in commanding us to keep the faith as a trust, and to refuse all novelties, that I think the bare knowledge of the New Testament quite sufficient to sustain any unprejudiced mind, against the sophistries of the work.

But, when I see such a scholar as Mr. Newman, bending every fibre of his mental frame, to the task of destroying the rule of Vincent of Lerins, and confessing that its application is fatal to Romanism, I find myself greatly strengthened, in my own position as a Christian of the primitive confession, and as an antagonist of the Creed of Trent, and the morals of the Vatican.

The theory on which Mr. Newman has submitted his whole soul to the Tridentine system, is one which naturally

carries him to extremes, at the present time. But as he is a theoretical convert merely, and as such a mere experimenter, at best, in his practical devotion to his principles, it remains to be seen where he will stop. He must go all lengths, of course, as do all theorists, and so the very boldness of the experiment may shipwreck his theory, and emancipate him at the last. Wait for the result. He now "deifies" the Virgin, and carries his enthusiasm for his new cause to an excessive and hazardous extent, yourselves being judges. He may yet find that he has mistaken *decay* for development, and that it is a fatal blunder to regard St. Paul as a lisping babe in theology, and Alphonsus Liguori as the perfect man in CHRIST JESUS!

As to the work of the late Archdeacon Wilberforce, on the Royal Supremacy, its sting is in its title-page only: for, while I must own, in all frankness, that there are grounds for a determined resistance of the Royal aggressions in England, at this time, I cannot but feel that the book of Mr. Wilberforce is neither just in its definition of the grievance, nor wise in the prescription of the remedy. It appears to me more like the vindictive blow of irritated self-love, than the calm complaint of a suffering witness for the testimony of JESUS.

The "Royal Supremacy," however grievous, as degraded to the purposes of State-craft, and ministerial policy, is, as a matter of law, a very different thing. It is, in its true character, as defined by law, a *purely temporal* supremacy, having no authority in things spiritual, except as the executive of what may be done by Convocation; and whatever it may have done beyond this is mere meddling, and arbitrary usurpation, not long to be endured. Nor does such an abuse of the Royal authority, in any way, commit the Church of England to anything which her own act, in Con-



vocation, does not recognize and decree. Besides, the Anglican communion is not English only; it exists in Scotland and in America, and in both of these countries it exists in entire freedom from any *supremacy* whatever, save only that of Christ. The "Royal Supremacy," therefore, is a local and accidental thing; not a matter of faith, but a mere compact with the State; and, as you know very well, in France, *is precisely analagous to the relations which the French crown has always sustained to the Gallican Church, in spite of its subjection to the Pope.* But the little finger of Louis XIV., to say nothing of Napoleon, was stouter than the loins of any British Sovereign, as a "bishop *ab extra*," (évêque du dehors,) since the days of Henry VIII. The late Archdeacon, if he now calls himself a member of the French Roman Catholic Church, in which he made his submission, has really "strained at a gnat, to swallow a camel." You know very well what the ultramontanists think of your Gallican *Regale*! I beg you to consider what it was in the hands of Napoleon I., and what it may be, at any time, in the hands of Napoleon III. And did the papacy prove any effectual restraint upon the *Regale*, when Pius VII. sacrificed the canonical bishops of France to imperial policy, in 1801? It seems to me a very cool thing, with so fresh an example of the practical workings of popery before our eyes, to commend us to the Papal Supremacy as a cure for the ills of an abusive *Regale*.

I knew the late Archdeacon, and have had conversations with him, at his own instance, on these very points, in which he seemed to seek the views of an American presbyter, as one no more concerned to defend the English *Regale*, than an Italian is to sustain your Pragmatic sanction. I delight to bear witness to the piety and amiable attractiveness of the man, as an Anglican ecclesiastic, and an English

gentleman ; but I must say, he was so morbidly sensitive on this subject, that it seemed to *fret* him, (as we express it) at all times, and to rob him of the calm possession of his faculties. He often seemed to admit the force of arguments, which he could neither answer nor yet accept as satisfactory, so sadly had he accustomed himself to a form of thought, or rather of theory, which had vitiated his mental appetite, and of which he could not be deprived, without longing for his stimulant.

But, how strange it is that one who could be so scandalized by an abused prerogative of his Sovereign, could reconcile himself to the supremacy of the pope, with its absolute and despotic dominion over *the faith* itself ! And that, too, just at the moment of its towering tyranny, as signalized in the late decree, which scandalizes even you. I consider Bossuet himself a sufficient antagonist of the late Archdeacon, and beg to refer you to his works in defence of the " Gallican liberties " against the aggressions of the pontiff, as an effectual reply to all he has advanced. If you read English with sufficient freedom, however, to undertake such a study, I cannot but ask you to examine Barrow's treatise on the Papal Supremacy, a standard work among us, and one which ought to be translated into all the languages of the Continent, with editorial comments, adapting it to the present time. When you see what safeguards we possess in our standard theology, you will cease to wonder at the comparative powerlessness of the attacks which have been made upon us, by our late seceders.

But there is another reason for this loss of influence. It is one which even the amiable and pious Archdeacon, I grieve to observe, already illustrates.(a) How is it that

(a) See the Christian Remembrancer, April, 1855.

men of character and of principle, no sooner go to you, from us, than they seem to lose all sense of honor and of truth? Forgive a question which your own views of the Liguorian morality, emboldens me to urge upon your convictions, in all its force. I know the stand which you, and a few others, have taken in reprobation and abhorrence of those pestilent works, to which the pope and the Roman congregations have affixed the highest sanction of your Church. But alas! how generally it infects your clergy. No sooner do our late beloved friends become the spiritual children of your theologians, than we are horrified to see them breaking out, as with a leprosy, in all the hideous deformity of the morals which used to be regarded as the peculiar stigma of the Jesuits. Thus, the new adherents of Cardinal Wiseman, deal in the wares of imposture and deceit, with the boldness of practised ultramontanists. Even Mr. Wilberforce quotes authorities which you and all Gallican Romanists consider as spurious, and which your eminent divines have rejected with contempt, or refuted with indignation. Alas, for the cause, in support of which such forgeries were considered requisite; but you must forgive us if we love the more and better, the cause, against which such weapons are still found the only implements of warfare.

And this leads me to say, with reference to the new dogma, which I know you deplore, that this iniquitous mode of sustaining it, is employed to such an extent, as it seems to me must call down upon many of your theologians the execration of the civilized world. The artifice of Monseigneur Parisis, which M. Laborde so cleverly exposes, are the work of innocence itself, as compared with the fraudulent performances of some of our Romish enthusiasts in America. There is no blush to the effrontery

with which they parade their contraband wares, and counterfeit coin, as if they were genuine resources. The very best of their publications is a little work, compounded by a Bishop Ullathorne (Irish, I believe), in which he ventures the monstrous assertion that "there is an unbroken chain of fathers for the immaculate conception." Instead of exhibiting such a chain, however, he fills up his pages with a little of everything else, citing among other authorities, "Mohammed and Martin Luther," both of whom were far more likely to speak in favor of it than any one of the fathers, I do not doubt. However, as neither Mohammed nor Luther are authorities with Anglicans, it is hardly worth while to inquire what may have been said by either of them. Of course Bishop Ullathorne knew very well that Luther himself *repudiated* in later days, what he had written as a monk, (b) and expunged the very passage in question from the later editions of his works; but true to his Liguorian morality, he scruples not to speak of it as "*a testimony left on record*" by the founder of continental Protestantism.

And now, as to the new dogma, I suspect that you will soon be obliged to confess that it is not only a crime, but something which at Rome is counted "worse than a crime, a *blunder*." All men who can think, must know that it has committed the pope and his entire communion to a palpable and monstrous novelty. What then becomes of infallibility? Pius IV. makes you swear to believe the

(b) I have examined the edition of Walch, A. D. 1742. He marks (vol. xi. p. 2614) the passages quoted by Ullathorne, as expunged in the edition of 1527; while instead of it a short paragraph was inserted, (in which the cowl is only half visible), to the effect that it is a mere theological opinion, on which Scripture says nothing, and men may think as they please.—Tz.

"unanimous testimony of the fathers," while Pius IX. forces you to do the contrary, in a matter which no one can so disguise, as to make the Fathers agree with it. If the pope be right what becomes of the Fathers, and if the Fathers be right what becomes of the pope?

Besides, what next? The winking picture at Civita Vecchia, and others elsewhere, are now "the foolery of a few simpletons," in your estimation; but so was the feast of the Conception in St. Bernard's day, to him. How long will it take to make it an article of the faith, that pictures have winked, and that St. Mary of the winking miracle, as well as St. Mary of the immaculate conception, is to be worshipped and glorified?

This perhaps is too absurd a suggestion. But how then as to the immovability of the earth? That has had a papal decision in its favor for two hundred years, and is much stronger therefore as a "pious opinion," than the immaculate conception ever was, till the 8th of last December. And then, it has a show of support from Scripture; and many of the Fathers could be brought forward, without mutilation or garbling, to sustain it. Nor will we resort to the scholastic subtilties by which the Fathers are now doctored into orthodoxy; we will not assert a distinction between *active* and *passive* immovability, nor say that the Fathers only believed in the earth's immovability in "the *passive* sense," or in some other sense equally profound, not to say ridiculous.

You must allow me to wonder on what your new dogma rests, as its ground of reception, among you. On the pope's decision! But do not Bossuet and other eminent men among your divines assert that the pope is not by any means infallible, but on the contrary may be a *heretic*? This has long been asserted in the Gallican Church, and

as the Council of Trent did not define the contrary, how are we to be sure of any such assurance? Not even a pope has defined his own infallibility, as a dogma of the faith; so that the new dogma, rests like the Hindoo universe, on the back of an elephant, which stands on a tortoise, which stands on—something which the Brahmins have not yet defined.

You speak of our late losses at Oxford. It is a subject on which we feel a little sore, I own, for among those who have left us, there have been a full score whose loss is really a loss. *But they have lost much more.* And when we see the pontiff himself confessing with what agony of heart he beholds the utter overthrow of his power in Spain and Sardinia, and in several South American nations, we cannot, in charity, think of comparing our sufferings with his, or pause to enumerate the many individual instances of virtual, or absolute conversion to Anglican orthodoxy, which more than balances our account with Rome.

And when we reflect on the various causes which have led to the Romanizing movement in England, and on the nature of the step, which the perverts have taken, we are inclined to think it one of those periodical manifestations of a contagious enthusiasm, which the history of the Church familiarizes to the Christian student, on a scale so much larger and more sweeping. Indeed, nothing but its comparative insignificance, leads us to doubt whether it ought not to be ranked with the Puritan fanaticism in the seventeenth century, and that of the Methodists in the eighteenth. In France, you are familiar with much more terrible reactions against even Gallican Romanism. The revolt of Newman will never leave that scar in the Anglican Church, which that of Jansen has kept open in yours for two centuries. And what has "the Oratory" done to

Romanize England, to be compared with what Port Royal did to destroy Romanism in France?

You entirely overrate the influence of the late secessions: it was not great at first, and is certainly, as we say in English,

“Small by degrees and beautifully less.”

We wish our perverses much joy of their new creed, and congratulate them on the addition to the articles of their faith, which makes their religion still fresher than their perversion. How comfortable it must be to them, to find themselves in a Church which enjoys an “infallible judge,” once in *six centuries*! We have little doubt, that even the Archbishop of Canterbury will be ready to reverse the Gorham case, and to decide in favor of Archdeacon Denison, when it has been discussed five hundred and ninety years longer: and should he then decide against Mr. Gorham, it is evident that Mr. Gorham and St. Bernard will be in similar predicaments; while if he should decide point-blank against all antiquity, Fathers and schoolmen together, he will only show himself very fit to be a pope, and quite as infallible as Pius IX. himself!

I am sorry, my dear sir, for your “unhappy divisions,” but since you feel so sorry for ours, I must ask you whether you have read the late work of Hirscher, on the actual state of Romanism in Germany, or that of Laborde on the new dogma, as regarded by many in your own country? Let me commend them to your particular attention. True they have been put into the Index, along with the works of Copernicus and Galileo; but, still it remains true, that the earth goes round the sun; that the best of the Romanists in Germany are longing for a reformation; and that the Blessed Virgin was not conceived without taint of

original sin. If you are not persuaded of the earth's immovability, I am sure you will find by examination, that much more can be said in its favor, than can be said, truthfully, for the new dogma, and both are supported by pontifical acts, the former claiming the precedence by two hundred years.

And now, my dear sir, *unity of faith* with the blessed apostles, is one note of a truly Catholic Church. You possess it no longer, if you did until now. You profess to-day, what yesterday, even your own bishops were free to deny, and what has been boldly denied by millions of Christians, in your own communion, ever since it was first broached. Meanwhile you will find, in our communion, the apostolic faith, perfect and entire; nothing new—nothing that was not professed at the Council of Nice, and the Council of the Apostles at Jerusalem. God has preserved to us this note, while from you it is taken away. Three centuries ago we were delivered from the perils which have destroyed your Gallican Catholicity; and now, we are apparently entrusted with the great commission of filling the world with the doctrine of the Apostles, and gathering the nations into their fellowship. The great historical movement of the century, is that which has diffused the Nicene Episcopate throughout the world, in the path of Anglo-Saxon civilization. It is only second to the original publication of the Gospel, over the Roman highways, and in the track of Roman conquest. Let me assure you we recognize our call and our mission. Look where we were three centuries ago, in the fires of Smithfield, or two centuries ago, beneath the foot of the Puritan. And now what has not the Lord wrought for us! The “seed is upon many waters.” When I look back upon our old reformers expiring in the flames for the apostolic faith, and behold



the results of their labors as we see them now, in all the world, I am reminded of that sublime passage of an English poet, in which their dying prophecy seems to be embodied, and addressed to the pope himself:—

“Fond, impious man! think’st thou the sanguine cloud  
Raised by thy breath has quenched the orb of day?  
To-morrow he repairs the golden flood,  
And warms the nations with redoubled ray.”

So far as you are of the old religion, I am, my dear sir,  
your brother in the confession of the Catholic and apostolic faith.

A. C. C.

*Baltimore, 1855.*

THE END.

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